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THE NEW REPUBLIC

February 28, 1981 Price $1.25

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How to Cut the Budget

The Editors

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TRB

from Washington
February 28, 1981

Ron and Maggie

Each promised an economic miracle and each attained the highest office in a democracy because of it. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher hasn't achieved her goal yet: she visits Washington this Friday. She will meet Ronald Reagan in the midst of the national uproar kicked up by his economic speech last Wednesday, one of the greatest Hollywood-style previews in the history of our country. Can he accomplish his goal? If he gets half or a third of it he will be lucky.

There are extraordinary similarities and differences in the Thatcher-Reagan stories. To a degree the problems were alike: each promised to cut taxes, reduce unemployment, raise defense spending, and curb inflation. In each case the conservative right took over to show the country how it should be run. The respective leaders repudiated the old-fashioned Keynesian economics. That was the economic marvel of the 1930s, when John Maynard Keynes showed that the capitalistic business cycle isn't necessarily self-correcting and that the government should start spending in a downturn and retrenching in a boom. Maggie Thatcher was elected two years ago with her special panacea, the monetarist theory hailed by Milton Friedman: it is all very simple, really, you control the economy by a slow and steady growth of the money supply (that's the dollars in people's wallets plus the bank credits and accounts outstanding).

Ronald Reagan came to office with a different (and not necessarily conflicting) gimmick: supply-side economics. You heard him explain it on television last week. Put emphasis on private production, get the government off our backs, reduce personal and business taxes to encourage output, don't be afraid of more inflation—goods will pour out so fast that prices will fall. It would appear that Reagan has modified this a little. Some of his economists from the traditional right, such as Arthur Burns and Herbert Stein, warned against the Kemp-Roth-Stockman radicals. One result was a decision not to throw quite so much money to the rich in tax reductions, and a counter-threat by Representative Jack F. Kemp, former quarterback of the Buffalo Bills, to turn loose his hypnotic exuberance on a rival bill.

When Jimmy Carter came to Washington he was appalled by the pork-barrel public works bills that were put on the budget every year as a matter of course and from the depth of his innocence he prepared a 1977 "hit list" of 18 projects which he asked to be dropped. Congress laughed at him. He would have saved the taxpayer a couple of billion dollars compared to the prodigious cuts President Reagan now asks. Reagan's audacious frontal attack and the Hollywood whirl he is giving to the crusade, plus the popular revulsion against inflation, may yield success this time. Sooner or later there must be a showdown between White House and Congress. Again and again the fragmented American government shows the need for better coordination.

Maggie Thatcher and Ronald Reagan have a good deal to talk about over the economy. We are bailing out our Chrysler, Britain is supporting its British Leyland, not to mention British Steel, British Rail, Rolls Royce Ltd., and British Airways. The British have gone deep into nationalizing industries. On the other hand, Maggie has a safe parliamentary majority and doesn't have to call an election till 1984. Reagan, by contrast, under calendar elections has a midterm contest in November 1982, when he faces two hurdles. In every US midterm election since 1934 the party that captured the White House lost seats at midterm. Also by that time the sacrifices of the present budget cuts will be felt, and the enthusiasm run out of them. At the 1978 midterm Democratic convention in Memphis Edward Kennedy brought cheering members out of their seats with generalized denunciation of "drastic slashes in the federal budget at the expense of the elderly, the poor, the black, the sick, the cities, and the unemployed." Next time the president will be a Republican.

Maggie's monetarism hasn't done so well; the economy is slumping. Monetarists say it's her fault. She was supposed to hold on to tight money and check government spending, but instead money supply got out of control. There were unexpected spending pressures from nationalized industries, and even the self-sufficiency in petroleum from North Sea oil didn't spur the economy. Does she falter? Not a bit. There is discipline, attention to detail, sharp intelligence, not a hair out of place, a touch of humor. She is the Iron Woman. Will she backtrack? Not at all; she has a favorite story and she will probably tell it here: which is the better nurse, the one who smothers the patient with sympathy and says, "Never mind, dearie. Just lie back and I'll look after you," or the one who says, "Come now, shake out of it"?

Mrs. Thatcher has one enormous advantage over President Reagan in carrying through a coherent policy in the huge, subtle, and complicated problem of the economy. She works within the legislature, and after her colleagues have formulated a program she can put it into effect—subject, of course, to a vote of no confidence. Reagan can't. He has prepared his program, given it a Hollywood premier, and now he must send it to Congress, which has little party discipline and no coherence, where every private interest, for better or worse, can gang up on it. A Brookings Institution study by Craufurd Goodwin shows near chaos on a parallel problem: it "must give one cause for concern about the capacity of government to deal intelligently and effectively with such a series of challenges."

Reagan is at the height of his popularity. If he persists, which I rather doubt, there could be one of the biggest struggles of modern times, a strange contest between rival heads of a two-headed government. If inflation continues there will be calls for restoration of the presidential right of impoundment (taken from Nixon), a call for the item veto, a likely row over interest rates between White House and strong-willed Paul Volcker of the Fed. Maggie Thatcher has a lot of problems, but none like this.

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Correspondence

Poverty and integration

To the editors:

I read Michael Kinsley's artful caricature of *Wealth and Poverty* (*TNR*, February 7) with considerable delight and amusement and a growing sense of exultation that in his generally successful effort to make me seem ridiculous, the author would mercifully miss most of the real vulnerabilities of my book.

Although I grant that much of the distortion of my views falls into the realm of cartoonist's license—I rather relish the "apeman" image—I must protest the wild misrepresentation of my position on perhaps the central moral issue of this century's domestic American politics: racial integration. Kinsley alleges that "Gilder is against integration of schools and housing." Since I have spent much of the last 20 years of my life—and all my last book, *Visible Man*—exploring the problems of racial relations in America, I find this assertion deeply offensive.

Like virtually all other civilized men, I of course fervently advocate and desire racial integration. Like Kinsley, however, I believe, in his words, that "programs like busing and affirmative action are vulnerable to conservative arguments that they don't serve their intended purpose." I must add that I think *Wealth and Poverty* is quite clear on this point. In the very chapter he cites, I write that "integrated schools are desirable" and that "*E pluribus unum* must still be the theme of our social enterprise." I do believe that programs of forced racial integration that ignore the facts of economic class will tend to foster racial divisions and hostilities.

George Gilder
Tyringham, Massachusetts

P.S. By the way, it was a terrific cover.

Michael Kinsley replies:

Mr. Gilder wants racial integration, provided it can be achieved without social class integration, which he fervently opposes. In the world of today or the foreseeable future, this means he doesn't want integration.

To the editors:

George Gilder upbraids government hand-outs and regulation for slowing the economy, but his supply-side strategy misses the greatest impediment to wealth creation. His analysis ignores the least-deserving class of non-producers, a group that sucks wealth from entrepreneurs and wage earners alike, which gets its share off the top—in the form of land rent.

Landowners appropriate values created by business activity and public works. High rents and high prices for land are a major source of inflationary pressure and a drag on economic growth. Risk-taking is diminished because the entrepreneur cannot get the landlord off his back.

A heavy tax on land would shift wealth from landowners to capitalists and laborers, stimulate economic activity (particularly small businesses), and help state and local governments raise revenue to replace federal funds which Congress will cut to balance the federal budget.

Alan Magan
Takoma Park, Maryland

Haig interview

To the editors:

I have a question regarding the article "An Interview With Alexander Haig" in your February 7 issue. Shouldn't the title really have read "An Interview With Arnaud de Borchgrave and Michael Ledeen"? After all, they were the ones who supplied all the answers. Maybe Haig ought to hire the two of them for his staff, and all three can solve the world's problems with a good dose of their brand of diplomacy (1980s-style gunboat diplomacy).

William H. Howison
Portland, Maine

To the editors:

Although I know little about Alexander Haig's political opinions, I learned from de Borchgrave's and Ledeen's interview with him a great deal about his illicit love affair with the language. Perhaps a virile imagination produces the phrase "an umbrella of confidence," but what sort of herculean vision would we need to image a "higher profile?" And if we find vigor in "a certain unpredictability," or "a certain tendency," then "outside intervention," or even that most feared disease, the one that strikes down the middle-aged in the prime of their potency, "disinformation," should not bother us a lick.

Sidney J. Burris
North Garden, Virginia

Press distortions

To the editors:

In reference to Henry Fairlie's "Hostages of Television" (*TNR*, February 7), I would like to point out that television is not the only medium that deserves criticism for its role in the recently concluded hostage affair. While in captivity the women of the group defended the press as "a free and a good, responsible press," when the Iranian students holding them complained of alleged chronic misreporting. However, by the time their ordeal was over and the ex-hostages were holding their West Point news conference, released diplomat Elizabeth Swift was so concerned about the subject and especially over a blatantly incorrect statement on torture attributed to her by *Newsweek* that she made a special plea to the press for honesty and accuracy. The *New York Times* mentioned it without comment in the last two sentences of an article ending at the bottom of page A12. On the sensitive subject of torture, that day's *Times* (January 28) also seemed to choose its headlines with minimal regard for their misleading implications. For example, a subheading of that news conference transcript read "Torture in the Desert" when the questions and answers in the text categorically denied anything of the sort. Another article in that section, entitled "Details Emerge on Terror in Captivity," implied that the hostages were continuously terrorized even though the copy described essentially only two extraordinary incidents during the 14 months of captivity which involved no more than a few of the hostages.

Mark F. Dreessen
Tuxedo, New York

The editors welcome correspondence from TNR's readers. Letters intended for publication should include the correspondent's full name, address, and telephone number, should be typed double-spaced, and held to under 200 words. Longer letters may be abridged due to lack of space.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

February 28, 1981

The Budget-Cutters' Ball

The Reagan administration proposes to cut $41 billion from the 1982 federal budget, and far be it from us to dissuade them. We don't believe, as Reagan apparently does, that the government is too large in any absolute sense, or that federal deficits are what cause inflation. But we certainly do agree that the present federal budget is full of fluff and waste and needless subsidy. Reagan's man Dave Stockman has actually found quite a bit of it, too, judging from the cuts announced last week. The administration deserves support on most of these cuts from anyone, liberal or conservative, who wants to break up the conspiracy of special interests against the general interest that is strangling our economy. Those who hope for a greatly expanded government role, as well as those who want a greatly reduced one, should be happy to see the Republican administration clean up the Augean stable.

The administration proposes to end at last some notorious boondoggles, such as free health care for merchant seamen ($110 million in 1982); special payments to school districts serving the children of federal employees (half a billion dollars); and absurd formulas that inflate federal pay scales (a whopping $3.7 billion). (Other boondoggles remain, however, like the Army Engineers dam projects, which suffer a token $95-million cut out of $2.7 billion.) The Reaganites want to cut a billion dollars from dairy price supports, though they shy away from dismantling the inflationary farm price support system completely and they go easy on other special favors for farmers, like cheap loans. They want to stop subsidizing college loans for those who don't need help (since 1978 there has been *no* income limit), to save a billion. They want to stop subsidizing synthetic fuels and other alternative energy sources, on the sound logic that any energy source that can't compete at current (decontrolled) prices isn't worth developing. This will save several billion. They want to charge the costs of inland waterways, air traffic control, and the Coast Guard to those who benefit directly from them, rather than expecting the general public to subsidize barge owners, airplane users, and yachtsmen. Air travel alone currently gets a subsidy of more than two billion dollars a year (including various other programs also being axed). Much of this benefit goes to owners of private planes, probably the nation's least deserving welfare recipients.

Cuts like these and others show a refreshing willingness to act on expressed principles. Other Republican administrations have talked a free market and a lean government; this is the first one in decades that seems to really believe in these things.

Now for the quibbles.

Not surprisingly, we start with social welfare. To stave off expected accusations of heartlessness, the Reaganites emphasize that what they call "safety net programs" have not been touched. In fact, they point out, they plan for these programs to increase their share of the federal budget from 39 percent to 42 percent over the next three years. This is a subterfuge, because the "safety net," as the Reaganites define it, is mostly transfers for the middle class. It doesn't include the most important programs for the poor. Social Security, Medicare for the elderly, basic unemployment compensation, and veterans' benefits—all primarily middle-class affairs—are part of Reagan's "safety net." So are Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and smaller programs for the elderly poor and disabled ($15 billion in 1982, less than six percent

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of the total "safety net"). But food stamps ($12.5 billion) and Medicaid for the poor ($18 billion) are not considered part of the "safety net." Nor are a variety of smaller housing, education, jobs, and health programs. All of these are to be cut or eliminated.

The "safety net" concept is in fact a political device masquerading as a display of compassion. It is an attempt to buy off some of the largest and most politically powerful groups, like veterans and the elderly, and win their support for the other cuts. By exempting these areas, the administration passed up some lush and perfectly justifiable savings. For example, according to the Congressional Budget Office, limiting Social Security increases to the average national increase in wages, rather than allowing retirees to do better than workers during high inflation, would save $4.3 billion in 1982. Glaring exceptions like this make the penury elsewhere a lot harder to accept with grace.

So what of the real safety net? Food stamps, our most straightforward and most successful redistribution program, is due for $1.8 billion in cuts, or 14 percent. This will be achieved by lowering the income ceiling for benefits (from about $14,000 to about $11,000 for a family of four); counting school lunches against a family's quota; and various administrative reforms. These administrative reforms—things like measuring family income and food prices retroactively—give off the genuine scent of the whole budget package. Explained on grounds of neutral accounting logic ("avoids the uncertainty of projecting food costs"), they generate major savings only by real reductions in benefits. They also sneak longstanding Republican goals in through the back door, such as denying food stamps to strikers.

THE REAGANITES are right: no one is likely to starve because of these changes in food stamp rules. The ceiling will still be 130 percent of the official "poverty line." Nevertheless, virtually every dollar saved by cutting food stamps will materially reduce the living standard of someone whose living standard is already quite low, and it's hard to see why this is justified. According to the *Washington Post*, "Stockman hopes to [make his cuts stick] by sharing the pain widely, so that both recipients of food stamps and the big corporations are seen to be suffering together." *Suffering together*? There is a very obtuse sense of fair play at work in Stockman's mind. We're not splitting a lunch tab here. Anyway, most food stamp recipients are not going to share at all in the tax cut these budget cuts are paying for. In fact, the new rules will sharply increase the effective "tax" they pay in lost stamps as their incomes increase—hardly good supply-side economics, or encouragement to work.

The administration plans to save over a billion dollars in 1982, and more than five billion by 1986, through what it labels "increasing the cost-effectiveness of the Medicaid program." What it actually proposes is simply reducing the amount of money available, and letting the states (which administer the program) figure out where to cut. The budget document expresses blithe confidence that "this degree of restraint can be achieved by States without reducing basic services for the most needy." And the next-to-most needy? Ah, well. . . . This is an invitation to triage.

The administration says this cut is just an "interim measure" until pro-competitive reforms can moderate health care costs. Such reforms, which are badly needed, would reduce the incomes of doctors and drug companies and other Republican constituents. Pending this miracle, the only way to save Medicaid money is to reduce health care for poor people. Once again, perhaps no one will die as a result, but it's hard to see the justification—especially when no other federal health care subsidies are being reduced in anticipation of an allegedly imminent health industry revolution. According to the CBO, the government will sacrifice $21 billion in 1982 by not taxing employer-paid medical insurance as income to employees. This is a subsidy for middle-class health care that's larger than the entire Medicaid budget.

SCATTERED throughout the hit list are various other government programs that mainly benefit people who need help more than other people (to avoid arguments about who's "poor"). The Reaganites want to cut three billion dollars from subsidized housing construction, save five billion by reducing rent subsidies, cancel the CETA public service jobs program for another five billion, kill the Economic Development Agency for half a billion, reduce vocational education funding by $230 million, and so on, down to canceling a neighborhood development program that costs nine million.

Most of the analysis that accompanies these proposed cuts is valid. These programs tend to be badly conceived, or redundant, or top-heavy with administration, or otherwise not cost-effective. Often, as with the housing programs, the benefit distribution is almost random: many of the poorest get no housing help, while others who are better off luck out. But Stockman's bizarre sense of equity is at work here again: he would deny decent housing to two poor families on the grounds that letting just one family have it would be unfair. Similarly, it may not make sense to have half a dozen different urban construction programs, but it makes no more sense to kill five without expanding the one that's left. All of Reagan's proposed cuts, taken together, don't rationalize government largesse—they simply reduce it. Canceling even the most inept social program amounts to cutting back on welfare, unless the program is replaced by something better (like cash). The president should not be allowed to pretend that his agenda is not a severe cutback in help for "the truly needy," as he did in his speech.

Even AFDC, allegedly part of the sacrosanct "safety net," is to be pruned by half a billion dollars (six per-

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cent) through some niggling formula changes. Among other things, these would count the income of step-parents and overlook fewer work-related expenses like day care in calculating benefits—rather perverse if you're interested in holding families together and encouraging work.

Another category of subterfuge in the Reagan proposals concerns plans to combine federal programs into large block grants for the states. In 1973 the Comprehensive Education and Training Act replaced various federal jobs programs with large chunks of money which state and local governments could spend as they saw fit to create jobs. It soon developed that states and localities were using CETA funds to pay regular municipal employees, to fund artists, and to do various other things Republicans classify as waste, fraud, and abuse. So now Reagan and Stockman propose to wipe out CETA public jobs. At the same time, they propose to take a wide variety of programs in education and health, and combine them into two large block grants to state and local governments. Do you see a pattern? The education grant would replace programs for the handicapped, for bilingual education, for desegregation, and 31 other purposes. The health grant would replace a similar variety. The catch is that the block grants would equal only 75 percent (health) or 80 percent (education) of the money going to the separate programs they replace. The administration claims this reflects savings from added "flexibility" and from the allegedly greater efficiency of state and local governments when the feds aren't breathing down their backs. In fact, there is little reason to think that state and local governments can spend this money more wisely than the federal government, and no reason at all to suppose they can save 25 percent without cutting back on valuable services. Possibly many of the programs involved are not worthwhile, but across-the-board cuts and abandoning them to the states are no way to prune.

A third bit of humbug in the Reagan-Stockman onslaught concerns their notion of "austerity." It's humbug because their budget, cuts and all, is not austere; and because there's no reason why every inessential penny must be squeezed from federal spending.

There are two notable exceptions to Reagan's alleged standard of austerity. One is defense. No doubt for symbolic reasons, Reagan has found $2.9 billion to cut from the 1982 defense budget, before the many billions he plans to add. But two billion of this is simply lower pay for civilian personnel. We agree with the administration that our military defense needs a major beefing up, and we accept that a satisfactory defense probably will cost more than we're spending now. But far more of the necessary future expenses could be paid for out of unnecessary current expenses than Reagan apparently intends. (See "Defense Without Mirrors," *TNR*, January 24.)

Correction:
The last line in paragraph two of Tad Szulc's article, "Deciphering the Russians," *TNR*, February 21, should have read: "Reagan may have had encrypting in mind when he spoke of Soviet cheating, and he may act soon to challenge the Soviets about reports of at least 30 Soviet violations of SALT I." We regret the typographical error.

ONE AREA that didn't suffer even symbolic cuts is that of tax expenditures. Reaganites are eager to classify health and environmental regulations as a "secret tax" on consumers, but they balk at any reference to the plethora of deductions and credits in the tax code—many with no connection to the fair and equitable raising of government revenue—as "tax expenditures." Evans and Novak complained last week that, "Implicit in this terminology is that all funds inherently belong to the government." But such metaphysical brooding simply obscures the fact that a dollar lost through such a deduction adds to the federal deficit just as much as a dollar spent directly. All these deductions have alleged policy justifications, but these justifications ought to be examined as ruthlessly as the Stockman boys have treated direct spending. The biggest tax expenditure is the deduction for home mortgage and consumer interest, which will cost the government over $30 billion in lost revenue in 1982. This deduction also incites excessive borrowing, which deflects many more billions from productive investment than the federal deficit does. And it contributes directly to inflation by driving up housing prices. The Reagan administration reportedly considered curtailing the deduction for interest on second and third homes, but decided against it. *Third* homes? Austerity?

Among the other golf club locker room chestnuts in his first economic speech, Reagan said, "Only people pay taxes—all the taxes." Who does he think benefits from taxes? Animals? Martians? Much government spending may be foolish or wasteful, but is the government spending too much in absolute terms? Reagan probably knows that old locker room joke, "How's your wife?" Punch line: "Compared to what?" Compared to other industrial countries, the government's share of the US economy is small. Compared to state and local government, the federal government has grown slowly in recent years. But the most important comparison is to the private economy. This is still an affluent country. We're buying Cuisinarts and Betamaxes by the millions. It is silly to deny ourselves pleasant acquisitions like good sewers (a billion reduction), expanded parks (half a billion cut), or cures for dreadful diseases (NIH cut $200 million) just because these nice things are bought through the government. And it's shameful to reduce welfare on the grounds we no longer can afford it, when this country—for all its troubles—is richer than ever.

Reagan's obsessive references to the national debt—

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a pile of $1,000 bills 67 miles high, we learned last Wednesday—is obscuring rather than enlightening. The debt is actually shrinking as a proportion of gross national product. This is not because of government thrift, but because inflation reduces the government's debt just like that of any other debtor. Nevertheless, this fact makes nonsense of the alarums about "the growing burden of federal debt." The debt is the least of the ways the federal government causes inflation. Trade protection for steel, shoes, and textiles; farm price supports; overindexing of pensions; the many real estate breaks—dozens of policies like these contribute directly to inflation, irrespective of what they cost the taxpayers. Whether Reagan tackles these—many dear to his own constituencies—will be the most important test of his anti-inflationary grit.

A final word to our own constituency, many of whom may be wondering by now why we haven't mentioned the cuts in Amtrak, in public broadcasting, in arts and humanities, in postal subsidies for magazines from *Time* to *TNR*, and so on. These relatively small matters are sure to get disproportionate attention from "opinion leaders," because they are subsidies to the opinion leaders themselves. We take a hard line here. Basic redistribution—food, health care, education, and so on—is what liberals should be struggling to preserve. As for the rest, we're willing to get off the gravy train if everyone else is.

White House Watch

Revving Up

While Ronald Reagan completed his long process of notifying the nation that he intends to turn it around in a big way with tax and budget cuts and general taming of the federal monster, the White House structure through which presidential proposals must creep continued to evolve in minor but revealing ways. So did Reagan.

Though the President appeared to withstand the pressures of his first weeks in office remarkably well, he got a tetch peevish at times. He complained on TV, for example, that the media had wrongly reported that he was about to favor the very rich while soaking the poor with his tax proposals. The media actually had dug out his decision *not* to give the rich a particularly generous tax break before his spokesmen were ready to confirm it. The President had groused earlier that the federal hiring freeze he announced on his inaugural day was misreported; it dated from January 20, he said, and not back to November 5. Reagan's freeze order indeed was dated the 20th and mentioned only that date. But the budget office memorandum implementing the order made it effective the day after the November election, with consequent shock to thousands of people who'd been promised jobs and legal complications that according to a federal judge could take the issue of the President's authority to the Supreme Court. After his press secretary, James Brady, proclaimed in an early briefing that cabinet members were free to express their own views, regardless of differences and political effects, deputy press secretary Lawrence Speakes said that Reagan at a cabinet meeting had expressed "some feelings that we should definitely do our debate among ourselves . . . and announce our decisions when it's necessary for them to become public." Question: "Has he therefore asked cabinet members not to air their differences in public?" Speakes: "Well, not in those terms . . . but I think the President would prefer to hear the views from them first—personally." What would Reagan do if members continued to differ in public? Speakes: "Well, take the jellybeans off the cabinet table."

How Brady and Speakes sustain their usual good humor in the teeming White House press room is puzzling at times. A black Hispanic with correspondent's credentials openly uses his presence to further the cause of black as distinct from white Hispanics and won recognition from Reagan at his first presidential press conference. The Reverend Lester Kinsolving, an Episcopal priest whom this reporter called a "bawling jackass" at one of Richard Nixon's last press conferences, asked Speakes whether Reagan supports an anti-abortion bill in Congress that would have human life "deemed to exist from conception." Speakes, declining comment on the bill, said that Reagan's view of legalized abortion is well known (he's agin it). Kinsolving then asked, "how does Mr. Reagan believe that the actual day of conception can be determined, Larry?" Columnist Hugh Sidey suggested recently in the *Washington Star* that the overgrown press pack be transferred from the West Wing of the White House to the adjoining Old Executive Office Building. Nixon's man Herbert Klein squelched a proposal by some of Nixon's other people to do that in 1969. If he were around the Reagan White House today, Klein well might reconsider.

The press staff, Reagan's day-to-day link with the public, was still shaking down in late February. Brady, who'd never been close to Reagan and was appointed after an embarrassing search for somebody else, seemed to spend so much time and effort winning access to the President and his senior assistants, and gaining their confidence, that little time was left for private huddles with reporters and even with his own deputies, Speakes and Karna Small. Brady, Speakes, and Small didn't have adequate information to supplement some of their announcements and a few of their mistakes were mildly ludicrous. Both written and oral announcements, for instance, said that Leonore Annenberg, wife of former Ambassador Walter Annenberg and one of the Reagans' California friends,

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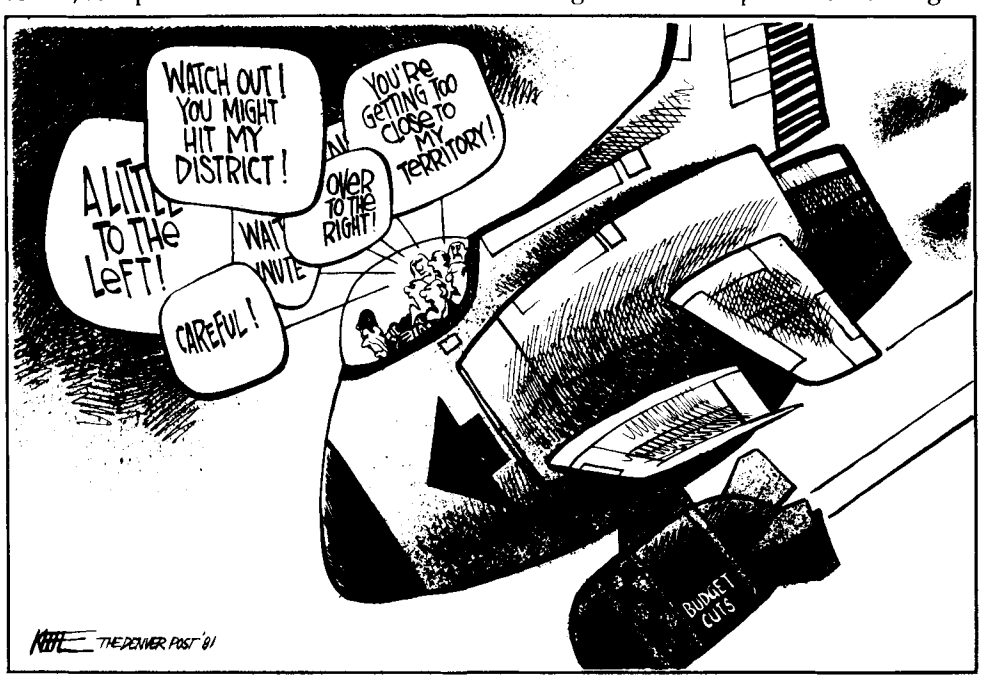
was to be "Chief of Protocol for the White House." It's a State Department job. Brady said he thought Daniel J. Terra, who is to be Reagan's ambassador-at-large for cultural affairs, would be taking an existing job. It's a new job.

The Annenberg and Terra nominations signaled the further movement of Reagan's kitchen cabinet friends from recommending and screening appointments into taking a few for themselves. The first appointee from that group was Attorney General William French Smith. Next were Leonore Annenberg and William Wilson, a retired Los Angeles businessman who had succeeded Smith as co-chairman of an informal personnel screening committee set up by the group with Reagan's blessing. Wilson is to be Reagan's intermittent ambassador to the Vatican.

Daniel Terra's is the most interesting of the kitchen cabinet appointments. He's a multi-millionaire Chicago chemicals manufacturer, a collector of American art who founded and supports the Terra Museum of American Art in Evanston, and a maverick Illinois Republican who turned up in Reagan's California kitchen cabinet last year. He's one of the very few non-Californians in it. He founded and heads the United Republican Fund in Illinois, which acts independently of regular Republicans and sometimes annoys them. Reagan's decision that he needs an ambassador-at-large to "act as adviser and coordinator of existing government cultural agencies and departments" became known to the working hands at the State Department and the International Communications Agency only when Terra's nomination was announced. It was news in particular to Mrs. Llewellyn Thompson, widow of a renowned career ambassador, who directs the State Department's Art-in-Embassy program, and to Jay Gilner, acting director of ICA's educational and cultural division. The Art-in-Embassy staff borrows American art from museums, galleries, and private collections and allows ambassadors to pick what they want for their residences abroad. ICA's cultural division runs the Fulbright scholar program and sends several art and other cultural exhibitions around the world each year, among other things. The Terra job description issued at the White House indicates that all of this and presumably more will be supervised and coordinated to the hilt for Reagan. The announcement reads in part: "Mr. Terra will make recommendations to the President and Secretary of State regarding broad cultural policies and activities of the U.S. Government. He will provide guidance to the Art-in-Embassy program to ensure that American art displayed in ambassadorial residences abroad is representative of our national cultural heritage and in concert with the President's goals and international policies of the Department of State."

This language must tell a great deal about the Reagan administration. What it tells requires more study. Mrs. Annenberg, William Wilson, and Daniel Terra are rich, like most other members or affiliates of Reagan's kitchen cabinet. On February 18, State Department officials had not been told and were trying to find out or decide whether Annenberg, Wilson, and Terra are to be paid for their labors.

The State Department and the White House had other problems. At least five intended and worthy nominations for State were delayed: Myer Rashish, a highly respected international economist, to be under secretary for economic affairs; John Holdridge, a China and South Asia specialist who helped Henry Kissinger prepare Richard Nixon's first trip to China in 1972, assistant secretary for East Asian affairs; Robert Hormats, who helped prepare all of Ford's and Carter's economic summits, assistant secretary for economic and business affairs; Chester Crocker, African affairs; and Lawrence Eagleburger, an ambassador and former Kissinger assistant, for European affairs. The fashion was to blame all the delays upon Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, who was suspected of obstructing all of them in order to do in Eagleburger. The word at Helms's office February 17 was that he wasn't formally hindering any of them. The most credible Senate information picked up by this reporter was that Helms and around half a dozen other conservative senators were threatening to block one or more of the nominations to get what they wanted in policy and appointments. It was said that they were slowly being softened up by Reagan, Secretary of State Haig, and various emissaries. The guess in this space is that Reagan


WATCH OUT! YOU MIGHT HIT MY DISTRICT!
YOU'RE GETTING TOO CLOSE TO MY TERRITORY!
A LITTLE TO THE LEFT!
OVER TO THE RIGHT!
WAIT WHITE
CAREFUL!
BUDGET CUTS
KEEFE THE DENVER POST '81

Mike Keefe

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and his people were hoping the President's tax and budget statement on the 18th would satisfy the Senate rightists. Rashish is technically, very technically, a Democrat, and his resistance to proposed cuts in the 1982 foreign aid budget could not have pleased OMB director David Stockman. But the delayed nominees were quietly at work at the State Department or, in Eagleburger's case, selling Reagan-Haig policy on El Salvador in Europe. The impression at the department was that Haig wouldn't keep them hanging around if he and Reagan were not confident that they will be nominated and confirmed.

John Osborne

Politics

The Endless Campaign

After he was elected attorney general of Missouri in 1960, Thomas Eagleton had a breakdown. He later explained that it was triggered in large part by the depression that naturally follows a campaign, even a winning campaign. Ah, campaigns. Such excitement, such purpose, such adrenalin-pumping madness. And at the end of it all, you get to find out how you did. Few enterprises in life offer such definition, including serving in elective office.

Although it is not possible to safeguard candidates from the post-election blues, there is a way to prevent those who manage the races from ever having to suffer mental or even financial distress come the first Wednesday in November. The solution is simple: perpetual campaigns.

Before Ronald Reagan even took the oath of office, the country's top political consultants were hard at work for clients up for election in 1981, 1982, 1983, and occasionally even beyond. Now this is not due to a conspiracy on the part of campaign consultants in order to keep money flowing during what used to be off-years. No, campaign cycles that last as long as an elephant's gestation are the result of myriad sociological and historical factors, none of which, campaign consultants will tell you, they are responsible for. Campaign consultants did not invent television or computers or preside over the decline of the parties and the patronage system. Campaign consultants merely have filled the vacuum these developments created in the political process. And if those who come into office as a result of the consultant's efforts are distressingly ineffectual, that is just not their responsibility, either.

Consultants give two primary reasons why a campaign means forever: technology and Jimmy Carter. "Politics has become such a big business, the technical aspects are so complex . . . the stakes are so high that you want to go about it in a technically superior way, a scientific way, instead of the old way," says Roger Stone, a Republican consultant who helped run Ronald Reagan's northeast campaign. Politics is also such an imitative business that "Carter changed things [during his 1976 campaign] by starting the season so early," Stone says.

Stone is an intense, self-assured man of 28, self-assurance being a quality that comes naturally to someone who worked for Richard Nixon at age 16. A tour of the computer center at the offices at Black, Manafort & Stone, Inc., in Alexandria, Virginia, gives some idea of why ideally you need at least 18 months to run a scientific campaign. Stone picks up a creamy envelope, an example of a mailing done for Thomas H. Kean, one of this year's candidates for governor of New Jersey. "It looks like a personal letter. There is no 'Kean for Governor' return address, or else it would go right in the trash," he says. The letter, in which Kean promises to lower inflation, strengthen business, reduce crime, and stop toxic waste dumping, went to a computer-selected list of 20,000 likely Kean supporters. The computer also determined the degree of the recipient's intimacy with Kean, and ordered an appropriate Mr., Mrs., Miss, or first-name salutation. The $8,000 mailing brought Kean $21,000.

But a fundraising letter is only one small part of a scientific campaign. "First we do an exhaustive public opinion survey, and we formulate strategy based on that data. . . . Everything is based on the polls. Without the data it's like driving across country without a road map," Stone says. "Then we structure the campaign staff, supervise all phases of the fundraising, oversee press relations—what I call 'free media'—do research, scheduling, and decide how to accumulate and how to spend resources."

In the case of the Kean campaign, Stone's firm is acting as the general consultant. Robert Teeter is the pollster, and Bailey Deardourff & Associates, Inc., is in charge of television and radio advertising. "It's an all-star team," Stone says. Stone's all-star analogy is right. To a large extent, nowadays, it is the political consultants who are the important players in politics.

Larry Sabato, assistant professor of government at the University of Virginia and author of a forthcoming book on consultants, says one of the factors a potential candidate for major office must weigh is whether he or she can get a top political consultant to run the campaign. "Landing the right consultant makes an enormous difference to fundraising efforts," Sabato says. "If a candidate can say he's got David Garth or Peter Hart working for him, the fact that you've never heard of the candidate before is not so important."

Sabato says that Doug Bailey of Bailey Deardourff was approached by six Republican presidential hopefuls begging for the firm's services, one of whom pleaded, "With you I can win; without you, I can't."

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"In last year's race for the Senate seat in Illinois, Sam Skinner, a protégé of Governor [Jim] Thompson, approached Bailey Deardourff," Sabato says, "but the firm chose to work for another candidate, so Skinner decided not to run."

That Bailey and his partner, John Deardourff, picked Howard Baker and Richard Carver as their presidential and Illinois senatorial candidates, respectively, presumably will have no bearing on their reputations as king-makers. If politics were football, a season such as Democratic pollster Peter Hart just had—working for Kennedy, Church, Culver, Magnuson, Nelson, and Stone, among others—would mean that Hart now would be looking for work. But it isn't, and he's not; to the contrary, he has been approached by more clients than he can handle for the upcoming season.

In fact, Hart's reputation as a perceptive interpreter of data has only been enhanced by the Democratic debacle, because Hart predicted the possibility of a Republican sweep last spring. "I feel we did superlative work. I'm not sure we could have done better," Hart says. "There's only so much one can do as an individual professional to change the broader pattern or stream."

That sort of modesty, however, is not the reason candidates pay upward of $500 a day to political consultants. The breakdown of the party machinery that used to select candidates, run their campaigns, and hold them accountable once in office has left consultants with the strongest voice in directing politicians, at least until election day. Because running for office sends one into such dangerous and uncharted territory, it's comforting to have someone who can point to a page in a strategy book and say, "This is what to do next." At those prices, a candidate is likely to pay attention. And the full range of services a consultant brings to his task can be nothing short of amazing.

MATT REESE has run 220 campaigns since 1966. He is an engaging, bluff West Virginian, who has been described as looking like a dirigible. Reese is at the forefront of a new system which some say will reduce the power of television in the political process. Through what is called the Claritas Cluster System, Reese is able to break down the United States into units of four square blocks, each consisting of 280 households. Like one of those specialty-act performers who can tell where you are from just by hearing you say "hello," Reese can tell what you think just by knowing your address.

His system allows a campaign to target very specific messages. Why spend money on television, which gives the same message to the group Reese calls "Central Parkers" as to the group labeled "Slavic Blues," when you can deliver the message these clusters want to hear using the telephone and the mail? If these two groups want two contradictory things from a politician, it does not mean a campaign has to distort the truth in order to please them, Reese promises. "You tell the truth, but you don't tell everything," he says. "When you put out a brochure that tells everybody everything, you're not telling anybody anything."

Political commentators bemoan this sort of fragmentation of the electorate—the appeal to the most narrow interest and abandonment of efforts to unite the community around shared concerns. But there is a certain nostalgic appeal to Claritas. It harkens back to the days when politicians could say pleasing, if contradictory, things to various constituent groups, without the inhibiting glare of the mass media.

BEING ABLE to tell what everyone in a district thinks, however, takes a lot of time and money. It's no wonder, then, that the top consultants don't have to do too much knocking on doors to sell their services. When a candidate finds out an opponent has hired someone with the power to read people's minds, then that candidate finds he needs the same power for himself.

The drawback to investing such authority in the political consultant is that, as one former consultant puts it, "Most candidates park their instinct and intelligence at the door when they start to deal with political consultants. They get intimidated by the language, the complexity. They're into a world they've never been in before. Sometimes you have to remind them why they got in in the first place."

But if the reason for getting into politics is sometimes difficult to recall, the political consultant doesn't seem to be the person to remind the candidate. Polls are the foundation of today's scientific campaigns. "What we do in the next 12 to 15 months sets up the last six [of the 1982 elections]," explains pollster Hart. Since it's obviously easier to move candidates to conform to the polls than vice versa, it's no wonder these consultants produce leaders who are better at following than leading.

Political consultants are vehement in stating that they *are* concerned with the political process and the consequences of their efforts. "A political consultant has a moral obligation to elect people who are up to the job and whom he agrees with philosophically," says one. By necessity, however, consultants can't get too involved with what happens once their candidate gets into office. By then a new election cycle has begun, bringing new candidates to counsel.

This removal from the process of government is nowhere better illustrated than in the recent move on the part of American consultants to export their services. International consulting naturally has its limits, free elections being somewhat less universal than Coca-Cola.

Apparently, though, the principles that require American politicians to match consultant firepower apply abroad as well. For example, the 1978 presidential campaign in Venezuela might well have been mistaken for a meeting of the US political consultants' hall of fame. David Garth, Bailey Deardourff, Joe Napoli-

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tan, Pat Caddell, and Matt Reese were among those guiding the 10-man presidential field in a country where OPEC riches helped buy American advertising sophistication.

This need for American know-how had legitimate precedent; during the previous presidential race, media adviser Robert Squier led a successful two-year effort to elect Carlos Andreas Perez president of Venezuela. Squier is an energetic, ingratiating Democrat who helped engineer the victories of governors Bob Graham and John Y. Brown and Senator Gary Hart. He also makes non-profit documentary films as a sideline.

The sweetness of Squier's victory seems untarnished by the fact that Perez's administration, which was based on modernizing the country through an unsupportable expansion of government programs, was such a disaster that it has left some Venezuelans longing for the good old days of military dictators.

Perhaps the seeds of Perez's failure were contained in the traits that Squier requires in a client: "[Someone] with a strong personality . . . who has imagination and is not afraid to look at new ideas." But then again, maybe something got lost in the translation: Squier doesn't speak Spanish, nor Perez English. Although Squier served as an occasional media consultant to the Perez administration, he says he never discussed the mistakes that administration was making. "That was totally outside my relationship," he comments.

Does it bother Squier that he couldn't speak his candidate's language, much less understand the implications of a Perez presidency on Venezuela? No, not too much. "The disadvantages are obvious when you don't understand the language or culture," Squier says. "But what I do is bring my experience, imagination, and analytical mind to a situation. . . . In some ways it's easier for political consultants to work in a foreign country. You don't carry excess baggage."

Emily Yoffe

Conservatives have bluer noses.

Censors Left and Right

The new right Coalition for Better Television held a Washington press conference on February 2 to announce that it will monitor TV shows for "violent, sexual, and profane content" during March, April, and May and will promote a boycott of the products of companies that sponsor objectionable programs. Advertisers who support "quality programs," on the other hand, will be rewarded by having their products endorsed by CBTV. It isn't surprising that the coalition's chairman, the Reverend Donald E. Wildmon, enlisted Ronald Godwin of the Moral Majority, Phyllis Schlafly of the anti-ERA Eagle Forum, and Judie Brown of the anti-abortion American Life Lobby to join CBTV's board. Nor is it surprising that George Will endorsed CBTV's boycott in his column a few days later. (Eyebrows may have been raised by Will's uncharacteristic criticism of "the pure commercial logic of oligopolistic competition," which leads to shameless "profit-maximizing," but he was slamming dirty-minded TV networks, not forward-looking oil companies, and anyway it takes unpredictability to sell a column.) Wildmon claimed support for his purposes from people like Erma Bombeck and "the beloved Bing Crosby" to enhance his group's appeal. But he also cited the comments of Tom Kersey, west coast vice president of broadcast standards and practices for ABC. "TV goes into your home like an invited guest," Wildmon quoted the ABC censor as saying. "You wouldn't want a guest in your home who said and did vulgar things." After the press conference, ABC quickly issued a statement saying, "we do not believe that any group has the right to appoint itself as the moral censor for all the people. We find the coalition's threat to boycott . . . totally unacceptable." Kersey now refuses to comment on use of his name to promote a cause his employer finds unacceptable.

A network censor who honorably chooses to wash his company's dirty linen in public is not the only surprising (though probably unwitting) ally CBTV has as an advocate for "clean" TV. The liberal Action for Children's Television and some feminists also have worked toward that goal, with varying degrees of respect for the First Amendment. They haven't had much success. But Reverend Wildmon has new right muscle on his side. CBTV may succeed where liberal groups have failed—and carry censorship to extremes that liberals should abhor.

Wildmon's boycott is one phase of a new revival of censorship by the right. Books, too, are back as a target, including Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* ("anti-Christian," according to one New Jersey school board), and Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer* ("anti-American, anti-Christian, anti-Semitic, and just plain filthy"). A new group called Educational Research Analysts supported by right-wing money man Richard Viguerie now reviews virtually every textbook used in the United States. The group has assembled a list of 67 categories under which a book may be banned. Category 43 ("Trash") includes *Catcher in the Rye* and *Manchild in the Promised Land*. Category 42 ("Books with suggestive titles") appears over a home economics text titled *Making It With Mademoiselle*. Books by Langston Hughes, Malcolm X, and Ogden Nash are grouped under "works of 'questionable writers' " (Category 44). The Moral Majority is currently advocating the banning of books and films in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Washington State, and Illinois, according to Judith Krug of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom. Since election day, Krug estimates that the

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number of reports her office receives about censorship attempts have increased at least threefold.

Wildmon's TV crusade shares with the Moral Majority and Educational Research Analysts a very broad definition of smut. Another Wildmon-headed group, the National Federation for Decency, has attacked even *Taxi*, a pretty good and thoroughly wholesome TV comedy. More alarming than Wildmon's mistakes, however, is his method. Putting the squeeze on advertisers (by urging a boycott of their products) rather than networks (by urging a boycott of their shows) is hypocritical, allowing boycotters to go on watching naughty programs even as they boycott advertisers who support the shows.

Wildmon has invited liberals to join in CBTV's crusade, making groups like Action for Children's Television very jumpy. Peggy Charren, ACT's president, told the *Washington Post* that she "wouldn't touch them with a 10-foot pole." She told the *New York Times* that the boycott is "censorship in its most obvious form," and that she worries "more about that than . . . about television programing." But Charren's group favors censorship, too—the liberal, regulatory, First Amendment-conscious, ineffective kind. ACT's two main goals are to eliminate TV commercials aimed at children and to increase the number of children's shows (and, theoretically, the number of good children's shows). Instead of boycotts, ACT has tried to use the government to achieve its ends. It has sought to get the Federal Trade Commission to control children's advertising and the Federal Communications Commission to threaten to withhold broadcasting licenses from stations that don't carry enough children's shows. Even if ACT had been able to rally the FTC and FCC to action, which it hasn't, it wouldn't have accomplished very much. Typically, the moderate-liberal approach toward improving TV has failed.

ACT's only real success has been in encouraging voluntary reform. It pursuaded the National Association of Broadcasters to ban the selling of products by the hosts of children's shows. Captain Kangaroo now may not extol the virtues of the well-tied shoe in one breath and those of Cheerios in the next. ACT also got the broadcasting group to ban commercials for fireworks and, on two occasions, to reduce the number of commercial interruptions during children's shows. And some vitamin manufacturers were pursuaded by ACT to take commercials aimed at children off the air after ACT had accomplished its only significant regulatory victory: winning an FTC consent order banning jazzy TV ads for "Spider-Man" vitamins. Such commercials, the group had argued, encouraged confusion of vitamins with candy, which led to some instances of vitamin poisoning. This was all good work, and it wasn't censorship. The broadcasters and advertisers were responding not to the threat of a boycott or government action but to bad publicity. But ACT's successes have been very limited, and have fallen far short of its goals.

Though ACT might like to censor TV ads or get the FCC to muscle TV stations, as a liberal group Peggy Charren and her band of amiable do-gooders pose no threat to the First Amendment. In fact, ACT even sided with the Writer's Guild of America in suing the FCC and the networks on free-speech grounds over the requirement to schedule a daily "family hour." Charren is proud of her opposition to the family hour, and refers to it often to verify her liberal credentials. The worst thing one can say about ACT is that, like many ineffectual organizations on the side of the angels, it tends to exaggerate. "Children generally cannot evaluate . . . the trade-off between the pleasure of consumption of a highly sugared product today and the painful possibility of a cavity tomorrow," Charren has declared. And also: "The dental and nutritional problems of youth in this country are too serious for us to continue to allow advertisers to ask children to play Russian Roulette with their futures."

ANOTHER set of would-be censors on the left are radical feminists, some of whom would represent a real threat to free speech if they could carry out their aims. Bridget Wynne, co-coordinator of Women Against Pornography, a radical feminist group in San Francisco, hadn't heard about Wildmon's invitation for liberals to join his crusade. Obviously, she says, her group isn't likely to agree with Phyllis Schlafly and Judie Brown, opponents of ERA and abortion, on a definition of obscenity. But she can't work up any indignation against Wildmon's tactic of boycotting advertisers to get at the networks. Women Against Pornography uses the same tactic against stores that sell *Playboy*, *Penthouse*, and *Hustler*. It hasn't worked, but Wynne says that's beside the point. Boycotts were "much more a means of publicity than a way of reducing sales."

One of the few instances in which a feminist group campaigned against an offensive TV show involved "Three's A Crowd," a syndicated game show that probably failed not because an advertiser boycott was threatened but because ratings were low. The indisputably vulgar premise of the show was that secretaries and wives compete for the boss's affection. Soon after the show first appeared in the fall of 1979, angry secretaries started to call the Los Angeles chapter of Working Women, a group with a national membership of about 10,000. A letter-writing campaign soon began. One thousand letters—some of them threatening an advertiser boycott—arrived at the offices of Chuck Barris, the show's producer. A meeting was arranged with local station program managers who carried the show. The program managers listened to the complaints and then said that ratings dictated programing decisions. The show was canceled by both stations soon after. Judith McCullough, who heads the local chapter of the group, says, "the impact of the publicity we generated was largely responsible." If the show hadn't failed, would she have advocated an

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advertiser boycott? "I don't know whether we would have gone that far," she says. David Kramer, a public relations spokesman for Chuck Barris, says the protest was "effective in concert with other things. Station people didn't like the show. It was a mistake. It was just not a good show." But when pressed, he admits that the immediate cause of the show's demise was poor ratings.

In his essay, "Pornography, Obscenity and the Case for Censorship," Irving Kristol asks the rhetorical question, "can a liberal be for censorship?" Yes, Kristol answers, if we can distinguish repressive laws from laws that regulate, "repressive censorship" from "liberal censorship." Fortunately, the problem with liberal censorship is that liberals make bad censors. They either approach minuscule problems with over-earnest delicacy or they approach enormous problems with laughable ineffectuality.

Liberalism depends on new ideas, and therefore on a climate free of censorship. Liberals shouldn't try to limit that climate. Right-wingers, on the other hand, come to authoritarianism and censorship easily. Unless resisted, the Moral Majority, the National Federation of Decency, the Eagle Forum, the American Life Lobby, and the Coalition for Better Television actually may succeed with their censorship efforts. Granted that much of TV contains trash, there is a better way to stop it than by censorship and boycotts. It is to turn off the TV. While right-wing boycotters continue to watch the very shows they boycott, the left should exercise some of the free will that conservatives espouse.

Timothy Noah

On the road to equality, it's Congress's turn to drive.

The Wrong-Way Bus Ride

by John H. Bunzel

The US Supreme Court declared in 1954 that dual school systems and other forms of *de jure* segregation were to be eliminated. It also ruled that it was unconstitutional for a state to segregate blacks from whites on the basis of race or to use racial classifications to limit the opportunities of all its citizens. This was a monumental development which, in the next 25 years, would affirm that it was wrong to distinguish among people on the basis of color or ancestry and that every assault on discrimination was grounded in the law of the land. Although it did not remove the poison of racism in American society, it profoundly changed the character and condition of our major institutions.

Although the landmark decision upheld the constitutional principle of school desegregation, it did *not* call for affirmative integration. Nor was it intended to promote a particular level of integration, much less judge-made policies of school assignment. The distinction is important. Desegregation does not necessarily mean integration, any more than integration is the only definition of equality. This understanding of the *Brown* decision was reflected in the specific language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964: "Desegregation means assignment of students to public schools and within such schools without regard to their race, color, religion or national origin, but desegregation shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial imbalance."

The first federal school desegregation legislation was enacted as part of the Civil Rights Act. It authorized the government to take a major role in desegregating schools. Even though the authority was of several kinds (for example, to sue and to provide technical assistance) the government's primary power and tool became the withholding of federal funds. However, Section 407(a) of Title IV did not authorize federal officials to issue any directive for achieving equal racial composition in schools by transporting children from one school to another.

In the past 15 years it is the courts that have mandated busing as a remedy to eliminate school segregation. Not only has there been a change in interpretation of what desegregation meant in *Brown*, but the prescribed objective has become integrated schooling, a goal which the schools have been ordered to meet to comply with new constitutional standards. Moreover, in light of wholly different criteria adopted by the courts, integration now has also come to mean a statis-

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tical racial ratio that can be achieved only by busing students out of their local schools. In short, by whatever coercive action the courts have deemed necessary, *Brown* has been reinterpreted to mean racial balance in the schools.

In communities throughout the country, attempts to carry out policies or court orders requiring integrated schooling have met with widespread opposition. Although public opinion polls show that most Americans believe white and black students should go to the same schools and thus support the principle of integration, the overwhelming majority is opposed to compulsory busing. No matter how the questions have been worded in polls conducted in the 1970s, rarely have more than 15 percent supported court-ordered busing to achieve some quota of racial enrollment. The unpopularity of busing is also found in both major political parties. NBC News reported in 1976 that only 16 percent of Democratic primary voters and seven percent of Republican voters favored busing. Further, neither blacks nor whites have approved of busing in majority proportions. Louis Harris, for example, has shown that only 38 percent of blacks favor busing.

It is not necessary to believe that "the voice of the people is the voice of God" to recognize that in a representative democracy public opinion is and should be an important force in politics and has always been relevant to the purposes of public policy. Thus it can be said that it didn't take last year's presidential election to show that strong majorities in the country want to end court-ordered busing. A critical question is how.

At the end of the last session of Congress, an attempt was made to attach a rider to the continuing appropriations bill that would have barred the Justice Department from bringing any legal action to require school busing. In the face of a veto by President Carter, it was removed by House and Senate conferees. Sponsors of the busing ban have promised to reintroduce the issue in the new Congress and President Reagan has said he would sign it.

ONE OF THE many problems with this proposed course of action is that it raises serious questions about whether such a ban involves an unconstitutional encroachment by Congress into the executive and judicial branches of government. Furthermore, would the banning of "any sort of action" prevent the Justice Department from bringing school desegregation suits altogether? By limiting the kind of remedy the department could seek, would Justice be prevented from ensuring that federal funds are spent in a nondiscriminatory manner? Former attorney general Benjamin R. Civiletti concluded that putting new restrictions on Justice "could disable the executive branch from taking any action to prevent the government from participation in a constitutional violation." Apart from these legitimate concerns (among others), there is an important and more practical question: is this particular approach the best way for Congress to give political expression to its feelings about busing and to determine how best to enforce what Senator Jesse Helms calls the "mandates of the Constitution?"

There are equally good reasons to be unenthusiastic about efforts to prohibit court-ordered busing by a constitutional amendment. This is not to deny that the "imperial judiciary" has stood virtually alone in advocating school busing or that the balance of power in areas of social policy has shifted toward judges (and also toward appointed officials in the federal administrative agencies) who are not directly responsive and accountable to the people. But the fact remains that a constitutional amendment involves a long and tortuous process which, as history demonstrates, is unlikely to be successful. On only four occasions have constitutional amendments been passed to overturn Supreme Court decisions.

THERE ARE additional objections to banning compulsory busing by constitutional amendment or by other forms of direct democracy such as recall, initiatives, and referenda. One reason James Madison preferred a representative government to a pure democracy was because representative government protected individual liberties and rights from abuse by unrestrained majorities. Legislators, as politicians, are required to consider their constituents' feelings but also to practice the arts of compromise and accommodation. Constitutional amendments and referenda make compromise difficult because complicated issues are reduced to a simplistic choice of "yes" or "no."

Seventeen years ago there was strong public support for the Civil Rights Act because most Americans share the traditional liberal commitment to equality of opportunity. But, as they consistently said, they do not believe in compulsory school busing. That is not their idea of what equality should be all about. No president has ever publicly and unequivocally called for busing either. Nevertheless, busing has become part of a major distortion which has occurred in the liberal tradition of equal opportunity. This transformation has occurred for two reasons: first, because civil rights groups have grown in political importance and fervor, and (particularly in Democratic administrations) wield influence out of proportion to their size. Second, the courts and bureaucracies have dictated solutions that should have been developed by our elected representatives.

The time has come, therefore, for a thoughtful and comprehensive reexamination by Congress (in the words of Justice Lewis Powell) "of the proper limits of the role of the courts in confronting the intractable problems of public education in our complex society." Congress could begin reasserting its own powers and responsibilities by modifying the direction the Court has taken when it has accepted busing plans that transport students across city-county, city-suburbs lines, even when this involves busing between wholly

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separate political jurisdictions. However, the Court has not always ordered that this be done. In 1974, in *Milliken v. Bradley*, the court ruled that busing across municipal boundaries was not necessary in the Detroit area, because there was insufficient evidence of segregation based on state action or segregative intent by suburban officials. But in 1979 the Court upheld sweeping federal court busing orders in Dayton and Columbus, Ohio, ruling that the two school systems had the "affirmative duty to eliminate the effects of past discrimination even if it no longer discriminates." If integration is truly a constitutional proposition and therefore a just remedy for the nation's past wrongs, why should only some school districts be integrated through mandatory busing, but not others whose history is not significantly different?

ANOTHER persistent problem has been that judges have gone beyond their range of perception or knowledge. The Supreme Court performs a major and proper function when it reminds us from time to time that the Constitution is a living document, and that its "evolving applications"—in *Brown*, that segregation is wrong and must be ended—often represent our best traditions and values. But the Court is not empowered to define our legitimate or even obligatory egalitarian goals and the means by which they should be attained.

In the spirit of "new beginnings," the new Congress now has an opportunity to express how it feels about the redefinition of equality—whether, for example, it believes equality of condition and result rather than of access and opportunity should be the defining principle of American egalitarianism. It could restate with unmistakable clarity the intention and purposes of the Civil Rights Act and then go on to develop additional guidelines for the courts and federal agencies. Congress should start by holding extensive hearings to lay the basis for sound legislative action. In a process of careful fact-finding that the courts could not easily disregard, Congress should call on parents, school officials, and experts from around the country to answer the question: has mandatory busing worked? Almost certainly, the burden of the evidence would be that instead of expanding opportunities for nondiscriminatory public education for children of all races, the busing plans ordered by the courts too often have been destructive of their own integrationist goals.

Some important findings would emerge from the hearings. First, "neighborhood schools" may have been used as a code phrase for racism by some parents. But for many more, such schools are, in the words of one mother who also believes in the principle of integrated schooling, "one of the few thin spiderwebs of community in a sprawling, impersonal city." In Los Angeles, for example, it is not true that racism is the dominant consideration among opponents to busing. David J. Armor, a senior social scientist at the Rand Corporation, has found from his studies that white students are not participating in large numbers in the court-ordered busing plan because the bus rides are too long and the academic achievement at the minority receiving schools is too low. Race does not show up as a statistically significant factor. It is likely that large numbers of white students would refuse to participate in the Los Angeles busing plan if the schools to which they were assigned were mostly white but were also a long bus ride away and had low achievement scores.

Second, there is no conclusive evidence that school desegregation programs have resulted in significant achievement gains for black children. At one time Professor James Coleman believed that the academic achievement of lower-class black students would improve if they attended schools with white middle-class majorities. His claim formed one of the pillars of the busing decisions and racial balance plans of the past 15 years. New studies, however, have demonstrated that the earlier belief was ill founded. Professor Coleman now reports that "there are as many cases where achievement levels decline as where they increase. Thus the notion that black children will automatically increase their achievement in integrated schools is shown to be false." Achievement is not unaffected by desegregation, but is about as often affected negatively as positively. "More than anything else," Professor Coleman says, "this shows that the opportunity the *Brown* decision created has been lost: if desegregation had been carried out appropriately, it would have meant a net gain in the achievement of blacks; but carried out as it has been, the gain has not been realized."

ONE OF THE most discouraging consequences of so many of the present mandatory busing policies in large cities is that they are making integration much harder to achieve. As William Raspberry has put it, "unlawful segregation is being replaced by legal resegregation." Almost predictably, white families have moved to the suburbs to avoid having their children treated as numbers in abstractly moral but thoroughly unpopular and disruptive court-ordered busing plans. The public school system has become a major casualty of court-ordered busing as growing numbers of parents demand some kind of support for private schools (tuition tax credits, voucher systems, etc.). Whether brought about by the courts or by HEW administrative action, "destructive desegregation" through busing was never part of the *Brown* agenda.

Third, congressional hearings could establish that various communities in the country have scored successes with alternative programs to foster school integration, such as voluntary busing plans, magnet schools, and voluntary school-transfer programs. If one outcome of Congress's inquiry is to impress the courts with the level of public dissatisfaction with mandatory busing, another should be that Congress supports and encourages voluntary integration efforts.

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Americans continue to believe in the fundamental importance of education as the primary means of attaining full citizenship in our diverse, multi-group society. But most Americans do not regard integration that is enforced by court-ordered busing as one of our basic goals, among other reasons because they do not consider integration to be the only important value with a bearing on education. As Harvard Law professor Lance Liebman has pointed out, the pursuit of mixed schools may well be a significant value—one worth pursuing in one's daily life and in one's political activities, "but it is not a *constitutional* value, one that must prevail against other important considerations, even against such ordinary values as economy, reduced transportation time, and neighborhood autonomy, and certainly not when preceived to be in conflict with the effectiveness of the educational process itself." Accordingly, Congress should reaffirm its own allegiance to the *Brown* decision of 1954 and should place on the public record once again both its commitment to a desegregated society and its strong conviction that it is morally and constitutionally right to achieve it, but not by imposing on the schools an artificial racial balance through compulsory busing. Congress would draw the line at the mechanical process of busing students to accomplish mathematical integration.

The proposal for congressional hearings assumes that the question of busing to achieve racial balance in the schools is as much political as constitutional in nature and therefore should involve greater participation of the political process in the ultimate resolution of the issue. The responsibility and authority of the Court to determine the constitutionality of busing would not be (and could not be) circumvented. But judges cannot replace elected officials who are politically accountable. Furthermore, if integrated education is ever to become genuine and enduring public policy, it cannot be the work simply of judges and bureaucrats. It will need to rest on a national commitment that is not evident today and that can only be developed and sanctioned by the political process. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. once remarked that legislatures, just as much as the courts, are the guardians of the liberties and welfare of the people. Congress should confront the critical issue of how equality in the United States derives its meaning as well as its limits from the larger system of democratic values to which it belongs. A fact-anchored inquiry of the sort being proposed here could explore whether mandatory busing to bring about school integration has in fact served the country well, with the kind of participation and exposure to public view that will keep the American people informed and involved every step of the way.

A one-act play with a novel conclusion.

Missiles Become Protected

by Les Aspin

(Scene: A Georgetown parlor. As the curtain rises, coffee and brandy are being served to assorted male and female GUESTS. Attention quickly shifts to two voluble speakers. Howard HAWK, a graying, slightly balding US senator dressed in a three-piece suit that appears to be one size too large for him, and David DOVE, a well-tailored Washington attorney and former defense official, also gray-haired. It is obvious these two are old adversaries. The deference shown by other guests indicates that a confrontation between them is viewed by all as the high point of the evening.)

Hawk: Look here, Dove, our first priority must be to spend more to protect our Minuteman missiles. They are becoming vulnerable to Soviet attack.

Dove: For 10 years you've been scaring people. . . .

Hawk: I know, I know. I told everybody 10 or 12 years ago that the Russians soon would be able to knock us off in a first strike because they were out-building us with more missiles and bigger missiles. You used to say that even though the Soviets had more missiles, we had more warheads. And you were right back then. But now we both know that in just a few years, the Soviets will have more warheads than we do. They're going to be quite accurate. The Russians are on the verge of being able to knock out our 1,000 Minuteman missiles.

Dove: OK, I have to agree with you in theory. But so what? We still have plenty of other forces. You're

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always touting the importance of the Triad—the three legs of strategic deterrence. So you know full well that if the Russians could knock out our Minuteman force, we'd still have our bombers and our submarine missiles. And they're not vulnerable to a first strike like Minuteman. No way.

Hawk: Aha! They may not be vulnerable now. But what about the future? Technology hasn't played itself out, you know. We and the Russians are both doing a lot of work in anti-submarine warfare. One good breakthrough and our missile subs could be washed up as a deterrent.

Dove: Come now. Technology isn't the only ingredient in warfare. Even if they make some stupendous breakthrough, no one can make a rational decision to start a war unless they can coordinate simultaneous attacks on our subs, planes, and Minuteman forces. They'd have to launch missiles from subs near our shores first in order to hit our airfields before we could get our bombers in the air. But to hit the Minuteman silos at the same time, they would have to launch their land-based missiles a half-hour earlier—and that would tip off our bomber crews. That's the whole point of the Triad and the reason you say it's so important—because it makes a coordinated attack impossible by definition.

Hawk: But the vulnerability of Minuteman makes the United States vulnerable even if the other legs aren't—vulnerable to blackmail. Consider this scenario: the Soviets strike first with their missiles and knock out our Minuteman force. Sure, we could retaliate with our bombers and submarine missiles. But they're only good for hitting soft targets like cities and industrial complexes. We can't make pinpoint attacks on their silos. If we hit their cities, the Soviets can obliterate our cities in retaliation. It's quite simple, Dove. They strike our Minuteman force and then make us an offer we can't resist: surrender or glow.

Dove: With all due respect, Hawk, that's crazy. Even to contemplate that, the Soviets would have to be sure they could knock out almost all our Minutemen with *nothing* going wrong. But consider what could go wrong. Just like us, the Soviets test their missiles East-West. But in a war they would be fired North-South, over the Pole, with a whole different gravitational pull involved. If that degrades accuracy by just a fraction of a mile over an 8,000-mile flight, they will have made the classic boo-boo of history. This is only one example. What's more, how do the Russians know we would read a missiles-only attack to be blackmail? Maybe we would respond with an all-out counterattack. The Russians have to know your blackmail scenario is loony.

Hawk: My point is that the vulnerability of the Minuteman force is being talked about widely in the international literature in just these terms. Such talk creates a perception of weakness. And perceptions are important. If we are perceived to be weaker than the Soviets, there will be grave consequences, perhaps blackmail.

Dove: Yeah, but it's only talk by nuts like you that causes these perceptions. You and your friends, Hawk, come up with these weirdo scenarios. Then foreigners read your stuff and say, "Look, the Americans say they're weak, so they really must be weak."

Hawk: If you'll drop the invective, I'll make one last attempt to convince you that Minuteman vulnerability is a real problem. We both agree that stability in the nuclear balance is important. Neither of us wants to create an incentive for either side to start inching a finger toward the button in a time of tension. If our Minuteman force is vulnerable, it may benefit the Russians to strike first.

Dove: I just finished saying. . . .

Hawk: Hold on. I'll grant your point that there are lots of uncertainties that may restrain the Russians from either trying to start and win a nuclear war or trying to blackmail the United States into surrendering. My point is this: if a confrontation gets heated enough, the Kremlin may decide that war is inevitable and that they had better be the one to strike first, while American Minutemen are still in their silos. I'm saying that our vulnerable Minuteman force makes nuclear war *more* likely. You and your arms controller friends always tell me your primary goal is to make nuclear war less likely. So you damn well ought to be concerned about Minuteman vulnerability.

Dove: My response to that, Hawk, is that the vulnerability of our command and control system is more important than Minuteman's vulnerability. Even if we cured the Minuteman problem, the Soviets could knock out the command and communications system through which orders to launch are given. This vulnerability gives a big advantage to the side that strikes first.

Hawk: OK, I agree. Let's do something about command and control systems. But let's do something about Minuteman vulnerability, too. Why tolerate *any* vulnerabilities that we're aware of?

Dove: And what's the cost of all this going to be? To protect our command and control network—my priority—would cost anywhere from nine billion dollars to $20 billion. To protect Minuteman would cost a hell of a lot more than that, maybe $50 billion. The country can't afford that. What's more, I don't think any of your schemes for protecting Minuteman will work.

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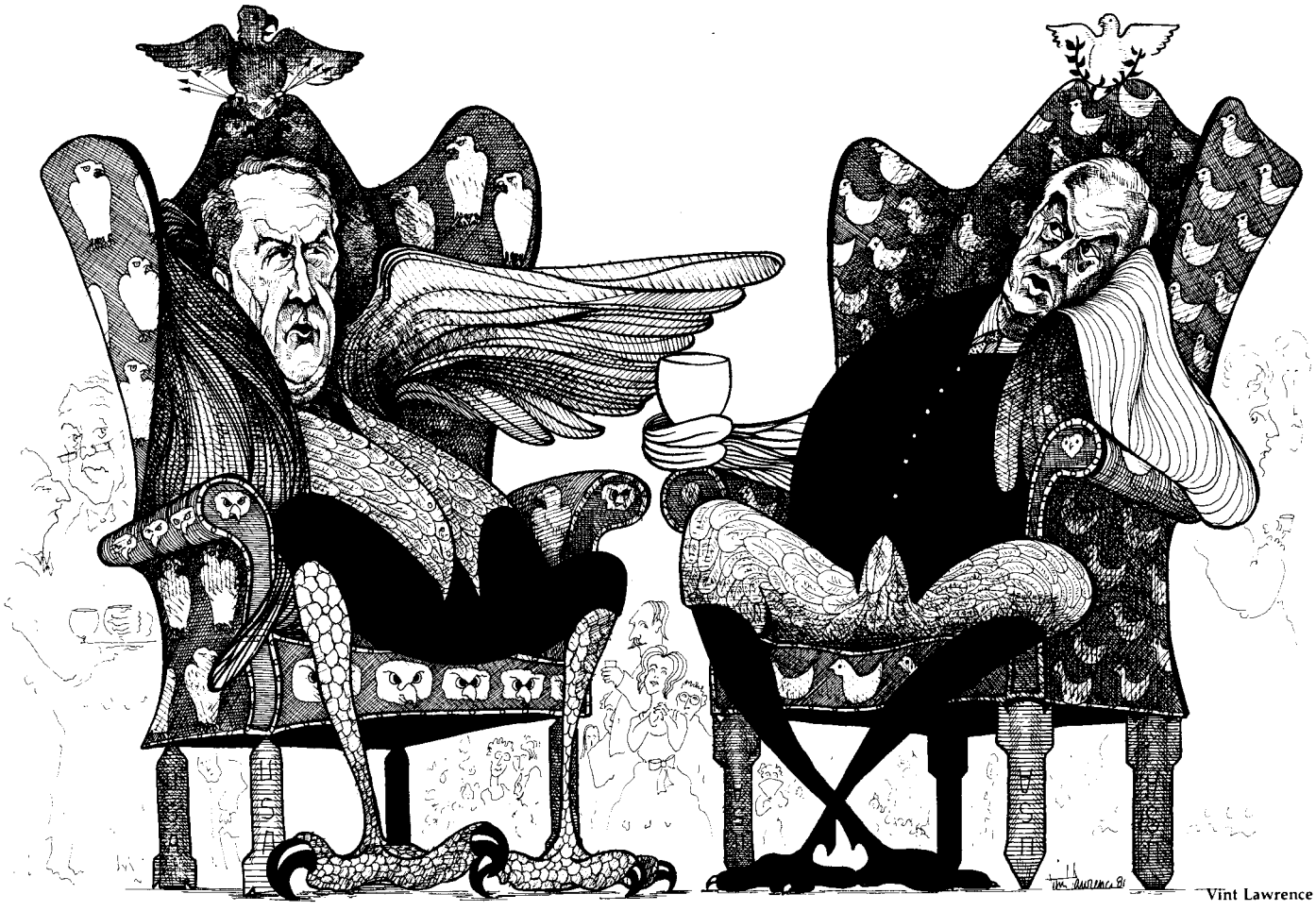
Vint Lawrence

Hawk: I wish you liberals would show as much concern for the pocketbook when you start inventing social programs.

Dove: What was that?

Hawk: Forget it. Look, we can't afford *not* to protect our missile system. Our survival, or at least our peace of mind, depends upon it. The best system the Pentagon can come up with is the new MX missile deployed in the racetrack mode. It's not perfect. It's expensive. But I see no alternative. If we build 200 huge circular highways, with 23 shelters along each one, the Soviets wouldn't know which contained the missiles. They'd have to target all 4,600. To be sure of success, they need to aim two warheads at each target. That would take 9,200 warheads, more than they're got.

Dove: I've heard all the arguments, and the MX racetrack is still the biggest turkey the Pentagon has ever devised. First, if you and your friends succeed in killing SALT II, the Soviets can build more than enough warheads to take out all those missile shelters.

But if by some miracle SALT II does go into effect, it would allow both the Russians and us to build one new type of ICBM. We'd build the MX with 10 warheads. We don't know what they'd build, but for your MX shelter system to work out mathematically, you have to assume it would be a single-warhead missile. That's highly unlikely. They'd be more likely to try for enough warheads to overwhelm the MX shelters.

Third, you'd better not forget that one day the Soviet system will be so accurate it'll be able to kill off a Minuteman silo with just one warhead, instead of two. When that happens, the Soviets get an extra 1,000 warheads right off the bat to target on the MX shelters.

My objection to the MX shelter system is that it doesn't make a hell of a lot of sense with SALT II, and without SALT II it makes no sense at all, Tell me what you're going to do if the Russians build enough warheads to overwhelm the MX and your racetracks.

Hawk: We can build more track and more shelters in which to hide the missiles.

Dove: Phooey! That's a losing game. It would cost us more to build the shelter than it would cost Moscow to build more warheads.

Hawk: That's not certain. I can show you some figures that say it's the other way around. But more track and shelters is not our only possible response. I think in the near future there may well be a need for a Ballistic Missile Defense system. We could build defensive missiles to hit their incoming missiles. There's talk in the Pentagon that we could set up a BMD to protect only those shelters that actually housed an MX—but with-

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out the Russians knowing which shelter that was. To overwhelm the BMD, they'd need a ton of warheads. And they'd still have to target all those empty shelters.

Dove: (Throwing up hands) Geeeez!!! You're gonna bring back the ABM!

Hawk: Well . . . a version of it, yes.

Dove: You're hopeless. What about the ABM treaty with the Soviets? Haven't you heard of that? Nixon negotiated that treaty. Now you want to toss it out the window?

Hawk: No, not out the window, Dove. I do want to renegotiate it to allow for ballistic missile defense. Things have changed since the ABM treaty was signed a decade ago. As you pointed out just a few minutes ago, technology brings changes. BMD is more feasible now than it was 10 years ago. You and I agreed back then—actually, you convinced me—that using ABM to defend cities was a poor idea. It *would* start a whole new arms race, as each side pursued a better weapon to overcome the ABM and then a better ABM to defend against the other's better weapon. As we agreed, whoever had the advantage of the moment would be tempted to strike first. But I'm not talking about ABM defense of cities now. I'm advocating an ABM defense of our ICBMs. We both agreed a few minutes ago that our Minuteman force was vulnerable and that that was destabilizing, even if you accorded a lower level of importance to that than I did. So, if we defend our vulnerable ICBMs, we're increasing stability.

Dove: Well. . . .

Hawk: Now, remember the three goals of arms control you're always lecturing me on: reduce the cost of preparing for war, reduce the possibility of war breaking out, and reduce the damage if war should break out. I'm dealing here with the second—reducing the possibility of war by making the ICBM force less vulnerable. I hope we won't get hung up on the alleged sanctity of some agreement like the ABM treaty. If the treaty doesn't serve the purposes for which it was originally negotiated, we should try to change it. The Soviets surely couldn't object to it.

Dove: Well, Hawk, you may be dealing with the second goal of arms control, but not the first—reducing the cost of preparing for war. What you're proposing will be astronomically expensive. First we will sink the command and control system deeper underground. Then you want to build an MX racetrack system. And finally, if the Soviets respond, we build a Ballistic Missile Defense system. Now, tell me, who is going to pay for all this?

Hawk: You know damn well who'll pay for it. Instead of just waving your pocketbook at my ideas all the time, why don't you come up with some alternatives? And first face the political realities. You may not like what I said about perceptions, but the perceptions are still there. All around the world, and here at home, too, people see that the Russians have systematically pursued a program to make our Minuteman vulnerable. They see us doing nothing about it except talk. We look weak because we are weak. And don't tell me we'll negotiate an arms treaty with Moscow to eliminate Minuteman vulnerability. They'll talk with us forever to keep us from building anything. But why should they agree to limit their advantage? The Russians *want* Minuteman to be vulnerable. And we don't have anything to trade to induce them to change their minds. If we're building a BMD system, then maybe negotiations can accomplish something. They might be willing to give up Minuteman vulnerability if we'll give up BMD. But right now we have no chips with which to play.

Dove: Why not put the MX out to sea, as former defense secretary Melvin Laird suggests? We can put them on hundreds of small, cheap boats. They'd be mobile. And there wouldn't be any local citizenry around to complain about missiles ruining the neighborhood.

Hawk: Sorry, I know it's a favorite idea of yours, but it won't fly—or sail—for three reasons. First, you'd lose the excellent control and accuracy that a land-based missile gives you. Second, if we're worried about Soviet ability to track our nuclear submarines, think how much easier it would be to track these surface ships. Finally, the idea fails politically. The Navy's opposed to staffing a fleet of PT boats stocked with missiles and the Air Force will scream bloody murder if you try to put them out of the strategic missile business. You have to face political realities, Dove. You can't force a weapons system on bureaucracies that are adamantly opposed.

Dove: As long as we're talking political realities, let me give you some. Your precious racetrack is never going to be built—not simply because of my point about the Soviets buildings lots of warheads to overwhelm the shelters, not simply because it will be the biggest and costliest public works project in the history of humankind, though both of these are good reasons. It won't be built because the voters in Nevada and Utah aren't going to stand for it. You know that. I know that. Everyone in the defense establishment knows that. Your racetrack is going to be nibbled to death with lawsuits, environmental impact statements, and de-

Coming:

Theodore Draper

on Double Standards.

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lays of all kinds. There will be pressure to shorten the distance between stations to save land, but that threatens your great dream of invulnerability. Before you can get approval, you're going to end up with a backyard racetrack. The Soviets will be able to overwhelm it pretty soon. And you'll have to go to the BMD system right away. In other words, if you did go ahead and build a scaled-down MX shelter system, you'd only be buying a couple of years of invulnerability at a tremendous cost to. . . .

Hawk: I know, I know, the old pocketbook business again. Well, I know about the opposition in Nevada and Utah and you may be right about the effect it will have. But what kind of opposition would there be in BMD? Suppose we went to a BMD right away without the racetrack business at all?

Dove: You mean use BMD at the 1,000 silos we have already? I don't know. It does remove the biggest political objection by killing your crazy racetrack and shelters. And it reduces the cost. But wait a minute. There are loads of different BMD systems. You aren't talking about Buck Rogers stuff—putting lasers up in space and zapping Russian missiles a few feet off their launching pads.

Hawk: Don't knock what you don't know about future technology. Some of the *Star Wars* weapons may materialize. But I'm not talking about that. If we want to go into BMD now, the technology that's nearest at hand now is missiles to destroy missiles. We've learned a lot since the ABM debate about how to handle the enormous number of computations needed to manage a realistic system. I'll admit it's still controversial, but there's a growing body of expert opinion supporting the idea.

Dove: If I were doing it, I'd build a BMD system around existing Minuteman missiles and save all the cost of a new missile.

Hawk: No, I'd build the new MX with 10 warheads, but instead of racetracks, I'd put them in silos protected by BMD.

Dove: Hold on. If you build MXs with 10 warheads each, the Soviet ICBM system will be vulnerable. When you put them in fixed silos, they're exceedingly accurate. The Soviets will worry that we're out to hit them with a first strike. Your system will trash nuclear stability.

Hawk: I'm not trashing stability. Even without MX, the Soviet ICBMs are going to become vulnerable anyway, just like ours. There's our Mark 12A warhead and all the other improvements in accuracy. The Soviets know all about such things, even though they don't make the front page. No doubt MX will increase Soviet vulnerability, but if we give the Kremlin a taste of its own medicine, maybe the boys in the Politburo will get interested in negotiating arms limits. Remember, we want a change in the ABM treaty that allows missile defense of silos but not of cities.
(Pause)

Hawk: Are you asleep, Dove? I'm not boring you, am I?

Dove: No. I'm just thinking. Although I'm not normally in the business of trying to sell your ideas for new weapons systems, I can see another advantage with BMD. It could protect our command and control networks in the silo fields. And while that isn't as sexy as what we usually argue about, to my mind it's a far more important source of instability than all this gibberish about Minuteman vulnerability. OK, Hawk, you've got my interest. But paint me a picture of our strategic arsenal as you see it a decade from now with your BMD.

Hawk: Lots of firepower. But to show you my heart's in the right place, I'll give you a for-instance based on the provisions of SALT II. Start with the MX in silos just like our Minuteman has been since the mid-1960s. To stay within SALT, we replace our three-warhead Minuteman III with the MX and its 10 warheads. That can be started by 1985. Then we upgrade our B-52 bombers so they can carry air-launched cruise missiles, and start on a new bomber like the B-1. Next, we speed up the Trident II submarine missile program and begin delivery in the late 1980s. Then we can go. . . .

Dove: Whoa! You don't get all you want with one good idea. You have got one idea. If we can have a powerful and survivable nuclear force with the land-based part protected by BMD instead of racetracks and shelters, then I'm very interested. If you can do that all within SALT II, excellent. Of course, your whole picture is premised on having to redo the ABM treaty with the Soviets. Why should the Soviets agree to that if they want to keep us vulnerable?

Hawk: I hear you. But I also mentioned having some bargaining chips before we go into negotiations. After all, for the Russians the alternatives to our going the BMD route might be a lot worse. Have I told you about some of the super plans we have for weapons in the 1990s? We can launch ICBMs from planes that the Russians could never hit. Or maybe put missiles on thousands of small boats that could cruise all the oceans of the world, and. . . .

Dove: Hawk, I was just about to go home without heartburn for a change. Why don't we quit while we're finally agreeing on something?

(Curtain descends as Hawk lapses into silence and Dove taps his pipe ashes into the ashtray.)

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Books and the Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on films

Hope From the Past?

What's going to happen in film? The question recurs—and not only in this column—for assorted reasons, economic and cultural. It's not arbitrarily a gloomy question: possibly, in the long run, we're just going to have to ask it under different aspects, toward different ends. But in a shorter long-range view, we ask it in terms of directors. Just as the question about the state of the theater usually means: "What important new playwrights are there?" so the question about film implies: "What important new directors are there?" Perhaps the strangulating economy, the alterations in political-social continuities throughout the world, the very changes in film technology (video tape, cassettes, and home viewing, for examples) will alter our needs and expectations in ways not yet decipherable.

At the moment, however, that opening question—if it means anything more than "What immortal classic will open next week and justify my seeing it?"—centers on the careers of directors, as careers. What new directors are there about whose careers we can hope? And the hard fact, in my view, is that we're still hoping about the old-timers, we're still hoping that Bergman or Kurosawa or Antonioni or Fellini or Buñuel or Bresson will come along with a new film to buck us up. All these men, in terms of effect, burst on the world in the 1960s. There has been no post-1960s crop to succeed them, or others of their contemporaries, at anything like their level. Abroad, the last 20 years brought forth Fassbinder and Wenders and Syberberg, Jancsó, Troell, Bellocchio, Olmi, and Teshigahara, of whom the first three still kindle hope. In the US, Peckinpah and Penn, Bogdanovich, Altman, Schrader, Allen, Scorsese, and Coppola, the last two of whom still kindle hope. Only certain film journals or film scholars (teachers and doctoral candidates), desperate for subjects, would maintain that the last 20 years have produced directors, internationally, on a level with their predecessors.

In which case, a film from one of the old-timers is more than a work in itself, it is or is not inspiriting generally. *The Last Metro* is not. This latest film from an "old master," François Truffaut—now a ripe 48—has, in a limited sense, a resemblance to Bergman's *The Serpent's Egg*: it's the film about the Nazi era that he's been promising himself for years, and it's one of his weaklings.

The first shot is of a Paris street in September 1942 hung with huge swastika flags. The first movement in the film is (as it often is) a tip-off to the quality of what follows. The camera zooms in on the flags. *Zooms in on them*—to say "See? Get it?" The hamminess of that camera strophe is quite unlike anything I can remember in even the feeblest Truffaut films; it was a kick in the hope—for the film in front of me and for the film world around me.

The Last Metro does not get much better. The direction never quite sinks to that banality again, but neither does it reveal anything of the celebrated Truffaut style, either in surprises of perception or in lyrical movement. It shows a sharper sense of editing rhythm than the merely competent, but it is directing without notable texture or reward.

Truffaut's new indistinctiveness has affected two of his longtime collaborators. The music by Georges Delerue, who did lovely scores for many Truffaut films including *Jules and Jim* as well as for Godard, De Broca, and Resnais, is here coarse, whooping things up in a cheap and distracting manner when danger threatens, etc. The cinematography by Nestor Almendros, a master whose films for Truffaut include *Two English Girls* and *The Story of Adèle H.*, is done with the palette of a marzipan factory—exactly the edible colors of those fake fruits and vegetables. If we hear the pat response that the Delerue and Almendros modes were deliberately chosen (as if we'd thought they were accidental), then perhaps we'll also be told why. How do they either give the picture depth or keep it skating along like good melodrama?

A quasi-melodramatic, flimsily clever script is what Truffaut has written, with his collaborators Suzanne Schiffman and Jean-Claude Grumberg. Truffaut says they wrote it to express "our aversion to all forms of racism and intolerance." Stanley Kramer could have said no more. There are only two "forms" in the film—Nazi forms, that is. The first is not dramatized, the proscription of homosexuality. The male and female homosexuals in the film never run the slightest risk of discovery. If you didn't know that such individuals ran a risk with the occupying government, the film would not tell you. The second is anti-Semitism, and how many of us have been waiting for Truffaut's condemnation of it? How could he have made a film about the German occupation without being against anti-Semitism? And how does he explore the subject—in thematic or experiential or any other terms—to deepen our understanding or even, minimally, to move us? This film's statements on anti-Semitism are about as daring and enlightening as the abuse

Films Worth Seeing

From the Life of the Marionettes. Ingmar Bergman once more exploring why lives that ought to be happy aren't. Not his best, but powerful.

Kagemusha. War as universe in 16th-century Japan. Not Akira Kurosawa's best, still it's Homeric.

Raging Bull. The squalid life of a prizefighter exploded into an archetype of modern temperament by Robert De Niro and Martin Scorsese. If you like boxing films, see it. If not, certainly see it.

Tess. Much more Roman Polanski than Hardy, but it's the surest Polanski in years. Much more Nastassia Kinski than Tess, but she's lovely.

SK

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of Mussolini's corpse by the Milanese mob after he was executed.

In no way does Truffaut extend our comprehension of the Occupation, not even through the specialized spectrum of the theater where most of the film takes place. Of course he was too young for adult experience of the period, but this wouldn't in itself disqualify him any more than the fact that he wasn't around in 1912 disqualified him for *Jules and Jim*. Some of the details in *The Last Metro* contradict things I've read. (For instance, the theater in the film is always crowded, yet Jean-Paul Sartre, who was writing plays then, said: "Under the Occupation people seldom went out in the evening; the theater was virtually moribund.") But details aside, empathically or imaginatively Truffaut adds nothing and, I'd say, subtracts something. He makes the sole offense of nazism its anti-Semitism. I'm not exactly forgetting the Vel d'Hiver and Dachau when I say that there was a great deal more danger to the world in Nazi Germany than in its hatred and murder of Jews. Truffaut's view is reductive of the danger then—and of possible future fascist threats. (Anything not anti-Semitic is OK?)

The title refers to the last subway train at 11 p.m. by which Parisians had to get home under the German curfew. Its only relevance to the story is that every theater had to plan its shows so that patrons could catch that train. The director of an off-Boulevard theater, played by Heinz Bennent, is German-Jewish and has disappeared, alleged to have fled France. His wife, Catherine Deneuve, the leading actress of the theater, takes over as manager with an old friend as director. A young actor, Gerard Depardieu, is engaged for a new play. Soon, and with complete non-surprise, we learn that Bennent has not fled: he is hidden in the cellar of the theater, listening to rehearsals through a ventilator, offering suggestions to and through his wife who visits him nightly. The fourth prominent character is a leading critic, the editor of the strongly pro-German *Je suis partout*, played by Jean-Louis Richard and apparently modeled on the theater critic and film historian Robert Brasillach. (If it is Brasillach, then, as he did in *The Story of Adèle H.*, Truffaut monkeys with historical facts to suit his emotional prejudices. Brasillach did not, as Truffaut's critic does, according to a voice-over, skulk away after the Liberation to die in Spain of cancer 20 years later. He turned himself in—courageously, one must say—to join his mother and brother-in-law, defended himself calmly, was condemned and shot.)

Out of these ingredients could have been built a black comedy (romance between Depardieu and Deneuve in a grim context) or a symbolist drama (the Jewish artist gone literally underground but still inspiring the operation; the theater as mask for truth-telling before tyrants, which, in the case of Sartre's *The Flies* and Anouilh's *Antigone*, it was). But this script doesn't use either of those approaches or any effective one: it doesn't even fall between stools—it lacks the weight. It just sets its situation, implicitly promises development of some kind, delivers none, utilizes a few conventional narrow escapes, then ends. The finish is a replay of an earlier Truffaut device. In *Day for Night* the street where the films opens soon is revealed as a film set; in *The Last Metro* the hospital scene that closes the film turns out to be a theater set.

The film doesn't bore, it simply never grips. The chief reason for its interest is its performers. Heinz Bennent, father of the child David Bennent who was in *The Tin Drum*, plays the hidden Jew with quietly stated substance; he has a neat lined face that speaks of much experience well understood. Gerard Depardieu acts with his usual vigor and more shading than usual, which gives him more the feeling of a man, less of a sex salesman. In rehearsals he sometimes has to do a scene two different ways; this would have been impossible for Deneuve on whom Truffaut's demands are carefully restricted. But she is so beautiful—more beautiful than she was in her 20s—and she uses her beauty so much more subtly than whatever acting talent she has that the "space" allotted to her in the film is filled. The loathsome critic is well and genuinely performed by Jean-Louis Richard, out of the knowledge that many Parisian artists and intellectuals, far from feeling conquered, welcomed the German victory as a fresh start for France. An elderly dresser is played by Paulette Dubost, whose charming face kept teasing me for recognition. A look at a reference book later and I knew why: Dubost was the flirtatious maid who makes much of the trouble in Renoir's *Rules of the Game* (1939). Truffaut likes these private linkages: the ingenue of the company is Sabine Haudepin who was Jeanne Moreau's child in *Jules and Jim* (1962). And—another link—Richard

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was once Moreau's real-life husband.

Given the domain of the story and the validity of the cast, the clinkers in the script are especially troubling. Depardieu is seen stealing a record-player from the theater, and shortly afterward a German officer is killed by a bomb in a record-player; why does no one connect the two events? When Depardieu says he's leaving to join the Resistance (whose presence hovers on the edges of the film), why does Deneuve slap his face? After Depardieu assaults the politically powerful critic in a restaurant for his vile anti-Semitic review of the theater's new play, why is his acting career undisturbed? Why indeed did the critic savage the play after we see him at the opening night standing and applauding? And since Bennent knows that his wife is in love with Depardieu, does our final post-Liberation view of the three of them on stage, bowing to applause, signify a *ménage à trois*?

The mind that let all these points pass is also the mind that failed to probe the theme of the film, that went for a sort of free ride on anti-nazism and anti anti-Semitism, that was unable, despite the choice of setting, to make much use of theater resources as an enrichment of filmmaking. (Compare Bergman's *The Magic Flute*.) And it's the mind that settled for the look of the film and the sound of its score.

So, no help from Truffaut in the matter of hope. Maybe the new Fellini?

The mystery of B. Traven solved.

Weimar in the Sierra Madre

by Paul L. Berman

The difference between the mystery surrounding Shakespeare's identity and the mystery surrounding B. Traven's is that whereas Shakespeare will be able to survive all the ridiculous theorizing, because of his plays, Traven may not be able to, because of his prose. Traven was not one of the great stylists. Certain of his books are so oddly written they sound dubbed. And his work is full of other idiosyncracies. Too often it descends into caricatures. There is the occasional disquisition on political economy. At times he can hardly go two pages at a stretch without launching some new attack on capitalism and the state.

Some of us manage to overlook these peculiarities. My own inclination is to pound hearty assent on the arm of my chair at each of Traven's political outbursts. But of course to pound on the chair is not the same as to mount a serious literary defense. Traven's work cries out for such a defense. It could be shown very convincingly, I think, that certain of his sins are not so grave as they appear, and that even his worst failures of style are balanced by other passages and indeed whole books in which he achieves a commendable simplicity and tenderness; and that in any case his deficiencies are more than overcome by his talent for narrative, his instinct for anthropological observation, his sardonic humor. Unfortunately a full-blown literary case for Traven has never been worked up. Why is this? Here is the real B. Traven mystery. There have been some academic studies. But why has no one ever written a substantial first-rate essay revealing such artistic strengths as Traven did have?

One reason is that confounded puzzle about who he was. Instead of literary criticism, for 50 years we have been flooded with glorious nonsense about whether Traven was a German, a Norwegian, a Mexican, or an American, Chicago-born; and about whether the kaiser's natural son, assuming there was such a son, might have gone on to become, in turn, a famous German anarchist, an obscure American Wobbly, a famous Mexican novelist, a literary agent; and about whether Traven might actually have been two men, or perhaps a committee, or was he Ambrose Bierce? the president of Mexico?

All of which will indicate what a great thing it was, two years ago, when a BBC television crew announced that at least these biographical questions, never mind the literary issues, had been put to rest. Now the producer on that crew, Will Wyatt, has published an account of the BBC findings and how they were made, so that everyone can judge for himself. Mr. Wyatt's book, *The Secret of the Sierra Madre: The Man Who Was B. Traven* (Doubleday; $14.95), is necessarily long-winded, given the morass of theory and counter-theory that had to be waded through (it is also unnecessarily long-winded, which is another matter). But one reads with satisfaction for, as the book proceeds, the likelihood becomes ever more certain that the BBC has said the last word on the mystery and that here, at last, lies the elusive novelist.

The BBC research began with a series of interviews with various Hollywood and literary figures acquainted with the eccentric man in Mexico who called himself "Hal Croves" and "Traven Torsvan," among other names. It has long been assumed that this man was Traven himself, despite his denials, and the interviews bore this out. Little that was new turned up in this phase of the research. But by gathering together so much that was old, and by comparing it with claims made by the widow of "Hal Croves," Rosa Elena Lujan ("Croves" died in 1969), and with papers in Mrs. Lujan's possession, the BBC was able to demonstrate the impossibility of sustaining any conclusion other than that "Croves" and "Torsvan" were indeed Traven. One of the interviews was with John Huston, who made the magnificent film of Traven's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. In a book that appeared last season, Huston clings to the theory that Traven was more than one man. The BBC dispenses with this as well.

Establishing Traven-Torsvan-Croves's origins was more difficult. As long ago as 1927 it was suggested by two German anarchist intellectuals, Ernst Muhsam and Rudolf Rocker, that Traven was actually their old comrade Ret Marut, who had disappeared a few years earlier. Marut had been the publisher of an anarchist magazine called the *Brickburner*. In 1919 he played a conspicious role in the revolutionary Munich Council Republic, and according to his own account (about which some doubts have arisen) was arrested when the Council Republic was overthrown and escaped execution by making a dash into the street. The *Brick-*

Paul L. Berman is writing a book on American literary radicalism.

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burner resumed publication clandestinely, but after a couple of years it and its publisher were heard from no more. Then in 1925 the writings of B. Traven began to appear. Muhsam and Rocker noticed philosophical and stylistic similarities with the work of Marut that led them to suggest the identification. An American scholar named Michael L. Baumann reviewed these similarities four years ago, and concluded that the identification was correct. The theory that Traven was Marut has the additional merit of giving Traven a motive for concealing his identity, since Marut was wanted for treason in Germany.

Not content with this kind of evidence and supposition, the BBC crew turned to policy and government files to see what else could be learned. The BBC ferreted out FBI files on Traven, too, though the documents were not useful: Wyatt got the impression that the bureau is staffed by morons. State Department records contained more information, including mention of an unsupported suspicion that Ret Marut might have been a German spy during the war.

The really valuable documents came from the Home Office in London. These showed that Ret Marut, a.k.a. Weinecke, Feige, Arnolds, and Barker, variously described as German, American, and Lithuanian, and as a bookseller, mechanic, and Communist, had been arrested in London in 1923 for lack of papers—apparently he had fled to England from Germany—and was ordered deported. This of course resembled the predicament of a sailor without papers depicted in the brilliant first 100 pages of *The Death Ship*. A variety of details pointed to the likelihood that the Home Office's Marut was indeed the same fellow as Traven-Torsvan-Croves. Above all, there was a mug shot. Same nose, same ears—yes, definitely, same fellow, though in the mug shot he appears to be puckering his chin and bugging out his eyes. All in all, the Home Office files were a major find that, subjected to Wyatt's analysis, confirmed the Marut-Traven thesis.

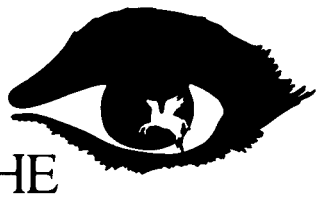
Marut's origins have posed a greater problem. It has been known that at one time Marut was minor actor on the German stage: a single unclear photograph exists showing him costumed as an Indian for a 1912 production of *Peter Pan*. But beyond this has lain the abyss, namely, among other theories, the idea that he was Kaiser Wilhelm's natural son. This splendid conjecture, which was apparently put about by Traven himself, has been repeated with great conviction in recent years by Mrs. Lujan. Two American researchers, Jonah Raskin and the San Fransisco journalist Judy Stone, have both been sufficiently impressed by Traven's evasive hints and Mrs. Lujan's insistences not to discount the possibility. The leading Traven scholar in Germany, Rolf Recknagel, has also refused to discount it. And it must be added that files dug up by the BBC indicate that someone at the State Department was impressed by the photographic resemblance between Marut and a certain "well-known German," evidently Kaiser Bill.

Wyatt and his colleagues went to considerable trouble over the Wilhelmine possibility, and finally were able to rule it out: Wilhelm seems not to have had any natural sons. That left a variety of other aliases to investigate, plus Recknagel's theory that Marut might have been a student from St. Louis who came to Germany to study theology, plus Traven's own claims, advanced at different times, that he was born in San Francisco in 1882 or in Chicago in 1890, on two different dates. The BBC crew plodded through these possibilities, examining birth records, looking through telephone directories for any surviving relatives, mailing inquiries to all sorts of unlikely cities and countries. Nothing turned up.

Eventually, however, the town officials of Swiebodzin, Poland (formerly Schwiebus, Germany), informed the BBC that one of the aliases given by Marut to the London police corresponded to a Swiebodzin birth record for 1892. The crew rushed to Swiebodzin and looked up the name, Hermann Albert Otto Macksymilian Feige. Baby Feige's father turned out to have been a worker at the local brickworks, which suggested Marut's *Brickburner*. Mother was a millworker, which was what Marut had told the London police, and her family name turned out to be Wienecke, which was another of Marut's aliases. Additional birth records revealed another little Feige, Ernst, born in 1895. The BBC scoured around for this man, in case he was still alive, and miraculously, was able to locate him. The elderly Ernst Feige, even before learning why an investigaiton was being conducted, volunteered what he knew about his older brother, "Otto": that Otto had left home before World War I, had been heard from once after the war, in the course of a deportation from England, and had thereafter disappeared for good.

Ernst introduced the crew to a sister, born in 1893, and brother and sister together recognized in a photo of "Hal Croves" of Mexico the long-lost Otto. Family photos of their own showed Otto as an infant, Otto as a young boy, Otto as a youth. The photos are reproduced in Wyatt's book. A more dramatic confirmation of Traven's identity cannot be imagined, short of a belated admittance to the Hohenzollern clan. For some reason, Wyatt fails to tell us how the aged siblings responded to learning of their brother's extraordinary career. But there is no question that H. A. Otto M. Feige was the man who became B. Traven. There are errors in Wyatt's book—he gets his IWW history wrong, for instance. But it would require an inconceivable number of additional errors for Wyatt and the BBC to have been mistaken in identifying Traven with Otto Feige.

So we now know the answer to the puzzle, though this is hardly to say that we know everything about Traven—far from it. Just how far is suggested by Jonah Raskin's experience, recorded in *My Search for B. Traven* (Methuen;



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$12.95). Raskin had intended for several years not only to solve the mystery but to write a biography. This was no easy project. The first time he set out to do it he wound up with a different book entirely, a novel based on his adventures with Abbie Hoffman. The novel was called *Underground: In Pursuit of B. Traven and Kenny Love*, and was more about Kenny Love, i.e. Hoffman, than about Traven.

In his new book Raskin tells us that his father warned him about the obstacles he might face: "Don't get sidetracked. And for heaven's sake don't start thinking you're Traven. It was bad enough when you thought you were Joseph Conrad!" A confusion over identity, unfortunately, was very difficult to avoid, since Raskin's basic research technique consisted of going to sites that Traven had visited, and standing there imagining himself as Traven. This technique was applied with gusto. Raskin moved into Traven's house in Mexico City, as a guest of the widow. He put on Traven's jacket and pants. He had his lenses inserted into Traven's eyeglasses, cut his hair in Traven's style, began to adopt Traven's political views. One gathers that the more he came to resemble the late novelist, the more the widow and stepdaughters began to flirt with him. Next came hallucinations. On a bus in Mexico City he thought he saw Traven, which was an odd reversal, since reasonably all the other passengers might have thought that *they* had seen Traven. In bed one night he hallucinated the man so vividly he was frightened into consulting a doctor—Traven's own doctor, naturally, who told him to be thankful it wasn't Zapata: Zapata cases are much more severe. Conrad didn't come up.

What kind of results can emerge from an investigator or an investigation like this? There are, actually, quite a few insights into Traven in the book. Raskin was able to look through successive drafts of *The Death Ship*, and though he gets a scene wrong—the hero avoids execution not because the guards laugh but because they get a call from headquarters—his description of how the book developed is still valuable. He reproduces some early poems published under the names of Marut and "Hyatamore von Kyrena," which was a new one on me.

Most importantly, he displays a greater empathy for Traven than Wyatt does, and is able to draw a defter picture of Traven's personal qualities and psychological difficulties. He supplies evidence, entirely believable, that Traven may have suffered one or more nervous breakdowns, not only in his lonely Mexican jungle exile but in the early days on the lam in Germany. According to Raskin, the underground issues of the *Brickburner* contained a number of deranged articles: "I am alone. I am the sun. I am the center of the universe. I am god." On the other hand, this may have been nothing more than Marut's Max Stirner egoism brought to rhetorical consummation.

Raskin, it should be noted, refuses to accept the BBC findings about Otto Feige. In his view Traven might still have royal blood, and whether he did or not, Raskin prefers to see the mystery kept intact. His book ends with a paean to the unknown: "I embraced mystery, I wrapped myself in its folds. . . . Mystery expressed the sacredness of life, a spiritual joy that connected me to the universe. . . ." Which is to say that *My Search for B. Traven*, having brought together a weird combination of critical acumen, yippie peroration, grave robbery, and psychotic episode, concludes with a blast of hot air.

Traven's reputation plainly will have to go on fending for itself, if anything more vigorously than before, due to the publication this year of his 1929 novel, *The White Rose* (Lawrence Hill; $8.95), for the first time in an untruncated

THE HARBOR AT SEATTLE

They used to meet one night a week at a place on top of Telegraph Hill to explicate Pound's *Cantos*—Peter who was a scholar; and Linda who could recite great swatches of the parts of the poem that envisioned paradise; and Bob who wanted to understand the energy and surprise of its music; and Bill who knew Greek and could tell them that "Dioce, whose terraces were the color of stars" was a city in Asia Minor mentioned by Herodotus.

And that fall when Bill locked his front door and shot himself in the heart with a Webley service pistol, the others remembered the summer nights, after a long session of work, when they would climb down the steep stairs which negotiated the cliff where the hill faced the waterfront to go somewhere to get a drink and talk. The city was all lights at that hour and the air smelled of coffee and the bay.

In San Francisco coffee is a family business, and a profitable one, so the members of the families are often on the society page of the newspaper, which is why Linda remembered the wife of one of the great coffee merchants who had also killed herself; it was a memory from childhood, from those first glimpses a newspaper gives of the contours of the adult world, but it mixed with the memory of the odor of coffee and salt air.

And Peter recalled that the museum had a photograph of that woman by Minor White. They had all seen it. She had bobbed hair and a smart suit on with sharp lapels and padded shoulders, and her skin is perfectly clear. Looking directly into the camera, she does not seem happy but she seems confident; and it is as if Minor White understood that her elegance, because it was a matter of style, was historical, because behind her is an old barn which is the real subject of the picture—the grain of its wood planking so sharply focused that it seems alive, grey and blacks in a rivery and complex pattern of venation.

The back of Telegraph Hill was not always so steep. At the time of the earthquake, building materials in the city were scarce, so coastal ships made a good thing of hauling lumber down from the northwest; but the economy was paralyzed and there were no goods to take back north, so they dynamited the side of the hill and used the blasted rock for ballast, and then, in port again, they dumped the rock in the water and took on more lumber, and that was how they made the harbor in Seattle.

Robert Hass

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English language edition. According to the BBC, this book was once investigated by the FBI. The bureau found it to be "an anti-American novel." Nothing moronic about this: *The White Rose* is indeed anti-American.

The book describes how a California oil company gobbles up a centuries-old Indian hacienda in Mexico for its oil and transforms the more or less contented traditional Indians into rootless proletarians. It is a novel of protest, though in a characteristically ironic afterthought Traven wonders whether the Indians aren't better off in some ways as rootless proletarians. There are hardly any characters, just social forces. The Americans are grotesque cartoons. Even as propaganda the book sags a bit, for though it is gratifying to see American oil companies belabored, Traven seems to be suggesting that what motivates imperialist expansion is not, say, the law of the falling rate of profit, but the greediness of chorus girls. The girls get their sugar daddies into debt, and then watch out, third world. He didn't think much of women.

Why he bothered to write the book is itself a mystery, since apparently it directly followed *The Bridge in the Jungle*, which touches on the same theme of American oil companies and Mexican Indians, only lyrically, with delicacy and restraint. *The Bridge in the Jungle* is a distinguished minor novel. Certainly it is Traven's most carefully executed work. But perhaps he maintained control over it only by promising himself a spree of bad prose and social didacticism in his next novel, which was *The White Rose*.

Still, *The White Rose* is valuable for its demonstration of just how Germanic Traven really is. It could have been predicted, of course, that as soon as his place of birth had been firmly established, some critic would declare that German culture is stamped on every one of his pages. Sure enough, it does suddenly seem that way to this critic, especially in regard to the present novel. The social protest and commentary on political economy in *The White Rose* have a lively touch that Americans, accustomed to Upton Sinclair and Marilyn French, are not used to, but which can be recognized in other German works of the post-World War I period. I think of Georg Kaiser's *Gas*, which also took the oil industry as an emblem of modern capitalism, or of George Grosz, whose piggy bourgeois carousing in whorehouses has more in common with Traven's American robber barons than do the real-life Henry Clay Fricks and John D. Rockefellers whom he thought of as models. The stance in these works is one of sardonic outrage, permitting a fine flexibility of feeling, now angry, now sentimental, now wry and humorous—a most useful stance for social art to adopt, and vastly more adaptable than the American social protest posture of shocked innocence.

Philosophically, too, Traven lies in a German or at least Central European mold. His mordant obsession with bureaucracy, passports, the police, authority run amok, the state, and the hapless individual is familiar material. His debt to Max Stirner, which Professor Baumann was the first to demonstrate, is evident—but only in *The Death Ship*, not in *The White Rose* or later novels. The influence in the present book is more likely to have been that underrated thinker, Gustav Landauer, the leader of the Munich revolution. Landauer's concept of folk spirit versus capitalism and the state supplies the central theme here, though in a crude fashion. In a more elaborate version it can be taken as the animating idea behind Traven's epic melodrama of the Mexican Revolution, the jungle novels: *Government, The Carreta, March to the Monteria, The Troza, The Rebellion of the Hanged, General from the Jungle*. (All but *The Troza* have been translated.)

I don't mean to overemphasize the Central European connection by mentioning it last in this essay. There were several cultural pulls on Traven, as might be expected of a Central European who lived in Central America posing as a midwesterner. But it is a good deal easier to appreciate a writer when you know what background he comes from, and I think we will do better with Traven the Weimar exile than we have done with Traven the enigma.

A Dogged Life

Grant: A Biography by William S. McFeely

(Norton; $19.95)

"One seemed to know him so well, and really knew so little." Observing President Ulysses S. Grant at close quarters, Henry Adams saw a mistrustful, shy, jealous, and vindictive man, dull in his outward manner, roused from brooding and torpor only by the instinct to do battle. Such an epitome of resentment and sullen force reversed the progress of evolution, Adams said—Grant was "archaic and should have lived in a cave and worn skins." And yet a grateful people had put this throwback in the White House. William Tecumseh Sherman, a more intelligent and thoughtful person than Grant, served and fought under him during the Civil War with "the faith a Christian has in his Savior." Gideon Welles, Lincoln's shrewd and incorruptible secretary of the Navy, found Grant "slow and utterly destitute of genius" but nevertheless "masterly" at war and blessed with "persistency." "Persistency" was the one trait Grant's partisans and enemies agreed upon.

During the Wilderness Campaign in 1864 Grant sent a celebrated dispatch to Washington. "I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer." He had made the brute calculation that even if the north matched the south casualty for casualty, the north, endowed with more blood, would inevitably win. The campaign was "a hideous disaster in every respect save one," writes Grant's most recent and most persuasive biographer, William S. McFeely,

> it worked. He led his troops into the Wilderness and there produced a nightmare of inhumanity and inept military strategy that ranks with the worst such episodes in the history of warfare. . . . When they made Grant a hero, what was it they celebrated?

Grant's persistency, along with a continuing indifference to disasters, carried him through two full elected terms as president (the only other Republican to have gone the distance is General Eisenhower). After a merciful hiatus of four years, during which he set another precedent by visiting China and being kowtowed to as "King of

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America," Grant made a run at a third term, only to be beaten out for the Republican nomination by bad timing—he returned from abroad too early and peaked too early—and by a compromise candidate, James Garfield of Ohio, a former major general of volunteers. Practically penniless, the victim of a Wall Street swindle in the planning of which he appears to have been at least a passively conniving party, and dying of throat cancer, Grant once again persisted. This time he wrote a superb military autobiography, his *Personal Memoirs*, which he finished a few days before his death. It restored his family to prosperity, and as a monument to a conspicuous career it has more native grandeur than the tomb in Riverside Park.

In his book Grant recalled that when he was a schoolboy he had heard "A noun is the name of a thing" repeated so many times that eventually he believed it. But on his deathbed he wrote this bitterly witty little note. "I think I am a verb instead of a personal pronoun. A verb is anything that signifies to be; to do; or to suffer. I signify all three." The verb principle and all it signifies has been active in the immense biographical literature Grant began generating at the time of his victories in the Civil War. The literature shows no signs of abating, as evidenced by the McFeely book, Richard Goldhurst's account of Grant's last months, *Many Are the Hearts* (1975), the three-volume biography begun by Lloyd Lewis (1950) and continued by Bruce Catton (1960 and 1969), and the eight volumes so far published of *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (1967-). One should also mention engaged critical discussions by Daniel Aaron, Gore Vidal, and Edmund Wilson, among others. Grant persists in his own right and also as a national symbol or symptom, a collective enigma that, as McFeely says, "deserves inspection" and has now received it in full measure.

From one possibly obscurantist but dramatically appealing point of view, the pattern of Grant's life, if not its day-to-day content and spirit, is mythic and heroic: a series of alternating, escalating victories and defeats involving a gift of leadership not wholly understood by its possessor. The son of a skinflint, sharp trading, boastful father and an undemonstrative, virtually silent mother (Grant was probably paying them back when he did nothing to get them a place to stay in Washington for his inauguration), he was sent against his will to West Point, which offered a

free though not liberal education. With the exception of spectacular horsemanship, a reflection perhaps of his instinctual sense of command, some surprisingly sensitive paintings, watercolors, and drawings, and his presidency of the literary society, his career at the academy was drab. Service in the Mexican War and in the peacetime army left him a poor man with a family to support and a reputation for drunkenness and incompetence in business affairs. In civilian life he was one of the social and economic victims of the open society. The former officer and gentleman hocked his pocket watch and cut and hauled firewood for a living. The outbreak of the Civil War offered him a last chance to rescue himself from drowning. He took Fort Donelson, nearly lost at Shiloh, starved Vicksburg into submission, and became general in chief of the Union army, having demonstrated, as Lincoln recognized, a determination to fight, at any cost, that set him apart from other commanders.

The scandals and ineptitudes of Grant's two terms in the White House have embarrassed his biographers. Some of them must have wished he had never been elected or had earlier accepted President and Mrs. Lincoln's invitation to sit in their box at Ford's Theater the night of April 14 (under pressure from his wife, who had enough of Mary Lincoln, Grant made "the most classic—and limp—of American excuses," McFeely writes. "He could not go because of the children"). Bruce Catton was apparently so appalled by the prospect of writing about the presidential years that he called his story quits with the warrior taking the final salute of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1865.

Yet if one is to find any wholeness in this life, Grant's failures in political office and as former president, his almost total lack of distinction in the associates he chose, the social climbing he did, and the goals he set himself cannot be separated from his brilliant victories. He may not have been, as pious interpreters of the Civil War liked to

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believe, God's chosen instrument for the extirpation of slavery. But, theodicy aside, there is a certain quality of grace or at least of God's fool about him all the same. With magnificent disregard and total faith he many times exposed himself to enemy fire. His failures are in keeping with his triumphs, on the same scale; the writing of his *Personal Memoirs*, under the cruelest conditions imaginable, can be seen as a sort of transfiguration.

One can also see Grant, as Professor McFeely does, in purely secular terms, as a man of low self-esteem and small achievement who relatively late in life discovered his métier, which was making war, practiced it effectively, at least in the eyes of his contemporaries, and thereafter remained insatiable for honors, recognition, and office, lost touch with the common people he had led in battle, and became an evangelist for what Andrew Carnegie was to call "the gospel of wealth." As McFeely remarks, "Grant was the first truly Republican president. Lincoln was a Whig."

Equally adept with military history, Reconstruction politics, and the tangled web of Grant's dismaying administrations, McFeely demythologizes a hero. "All the present study has tried to do is to take him seriously as a man," he says in an epilogue.

> Grant did not make war for reasons or in ways that ennoble the Civil War. He did not rise above limited talents or inspire others to do so in ways that make his administration a credit to American politics. If Ulysses Grant was, in any measure, 'the concentration of all that is American' and we still believe in democracy, his story is troubling.

This clearsightedness, along with McFeely's unfailing intelligence and his existential sympathy with a fundamentally unattractive subject, informs his entire biography.

Stereotypes fall by the way. All through the war, in the ceaseless jockeying for presidential favor and preferment that occupied too much of the energies of the generals, Grant displayed a gift for playing the game, and playing it better than the others. He knew the uses of tradeoff, conciliation, and seemly modesty. Toward the end of the war we see him not merely preparing to accept a military surrender but, politically, in ways that clearly exceeded his authority, shaping the terms and policies of the peace, and with an eye very much to his own future. His ill-fated attempt when president to bypass Congress and unilaterally, in effect, annex what is now the Dominican Republic was motivated by a strong if harebrained political policy: he hoped to solve the race problem by moving the black people of the United States to the Caribbean. Here, as in other debacles, he simply assumed that in peace as in war he would prevail. Grant was by no means "the baby politician" Adams (and most of the biographers) believed he was; the story of his presidency is not that of a political innocent hoodwinked by unscrupulous professionals.

Perhaps McFeely should have given more space in his narrative to the West Point years and Grant's cadet contemporaries and near contemporaries, northern and southern. Acquaintanceships at the academy and later in the Mexican campaign provide an essential background for understanding part of Civil War strategy as a reading of the enemy's intimate character and style. But at the point in this biography at which Grant discovers his métier McFeely discovers his proper focus.

> War, for a man like Ulysses Grant, was the only situation in which he could truly connect to his country and countrymen and be at one with them and with himself. . . . Grant did not like the vainglory of victory or the drama of high strategy or the blood of battle, and he did not think all wars worth fighting, yet some essential part of his being was brought into play only in war. He never celebrated this fact, but neither did he deny it; he knew it was true. Only in war—and possibly, at the end of his life, in writing about the war—did he find the completeness of experience that, when engaged in it, was so intensely his.

This version of Grant may not have been able to pass muster before the Vietnam era, but it seems just right, credible and corrective, for our present time and condition.

Justin Kaplan

Justin Kaplan is the author of the current *Walt Whitman: A Life* and of the Pulitzer Prize winning biography, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, both published by Simon & Schuster.

Vengeful Fantasies

Of Women and Their Elegance by Norman Mailer

(Simon & Schuster; $29.95)

Marilyn by Norman Mailer

(Grosset & Dunlap; $11.95 paper)

I used to know why I loved Marilyn Monroe; I used to know why I wept when she died. That was before I read Norman Mailer's *Marilyn* and Mailer's *Of Women and Their Elegance*. Mailer has not only bruised my memory of Marilyn, he has convinced me that Pauline Kael's criticism of *Marilyn*, his first exercise in necrophiliac porn, was apt. "America's greatest writer," Kael said, "is a bum."

What is sadder: the spectacle of Mailer committing a sin against his own talent, or the debasement of Marilyn by a man who has staked her out to adore her, who certainly lusted after her, and whose obsession with her is so tawdry as to violate not only memory but imagination? He wanted, he said in *New York Magazine* in his preemptive strike against the critics, not "to add to Miss Monroe's legend but to shock its roots." Alas, we are left with nothing but legend. There is no gritty sense of the palpable, the real, the true. To read these books is to wander through a graveyard, a junkyard, a flea market of masturbatory fantasies. To read these books is to learn little of Marilyn, and more about Mailer than, for the sake of his dignity, it behooves us to know.

One grieves for the terrible way in which a woman who is perceived as the personification of sex is punished for being sexual. One despairs. She was a murderess, Mailer tells us (no matter

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that he gussies up this perception and trots it out as metaphor—it is what he believes of her). She was murdered, Mailer tells us; and finally he dredges his psyche and comes up with that most banal and terrifying of suggestions: Marilyn, "an angel of sex," "a queen of a castrator," was in fact a slut, therefore in fact and of necessity frigid, "a sexual oven whose fire may rarely have been lit." He obliterates her. That simple-minded equation; that life-denying cliché: sex equals annihilation. Are all men so frightened of sexual women as to believe that?

There has been a glut of Monroe movies on afternoon television lately (a glut also, of course, of talk-show appearances by Mailer). So I watched them, hoping to resurrect my pre-Mailer impressions of Monroe: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953); *Let's Make Love* (1960); *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953). In all of them she is wispy and voluptuous, naughty and nice and sugar and spice, and most of all pliant (though not altogether complacent), and . . . what? Adorable? Yes. A joke, a parody of sex? Yes, that too. Both sexy and a caricature of sexiness. And how much of this was a calculated put-on, or a desperate attempt to live up to the image engineered for her by the studio—by which dissembling to earn her daily bread—it is now, post-Mailer, impossible to tell. Perhaps even without Mailer we would now see her—on screen—as campy. But she transcended as well as complemented her screen image. When she lived, many of us responded protectively, as Diana Trilling did, to her "extreme vulnerability." What was there about her that inspired this yearning to save, to heal?

On screen, pink cotton candy in motion, she jiggles and she giggles; her little-girl voice is like the tinkling of a calliope. ("Rinky-dink," Mailer nicely calls it.) In *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, she makes Jane Russell look, by comparison, like a female impersonator—a friendly female impersonator, eager to serve Marilyn. In *How to Marry a Millionaire*, her sweetness makes Betty Grable look hard-edged and almost gun moll tough. But it is impossible to think of her performing Anna Christie to raves from Lee Strasberg, impossible to believe that Strasberg said she was more brilliant than Brando. For one thing, there was that mouth: she always looks as if she is massaging her upper teeth with her upper lip after eating a slightly unripe persimmon and finding it obscenely delicious. One simply cannot imagine her saying, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" with her mouth slithering in all directions. Yet we railed when people called her a joke because she aspired to be a serious actress. If so, was she a joke? If she was a joke on screen (and she wasn't—isn't—even now when we watch her, quite), was she a joke off screen? A joke, a bitch-goddess, a murdered murderess . . . what? Mailer can't enlighten us. He can only rob us of the joy we once had in her. She was—is—ineffably touching. I no longer can attempt to analyze why.

"Please don't make me a joke," she said to the last person who interviewed her. She didn't know that a hack is more to be feared than a Mailer.

Mailer calls *Marilyn* a "novel in the form of biography." He calls *Of Women and Their Elegance* "an imaginary memoir, . . . a set of interviews that never took place between Norman Mailer and Marilyn Monroe." If only Mailer had done less embroidering upon facts and relied more upon the facts themselves to reveal her! It is true, of course, as Mailer says, that personality can be submerged by facts; but personality can also be drowned in nuances—and Monroe is submerged in Mailer's fantasies. Arthur Miller, in his pained and painful play *After the Fall*, also deified/defiled her; but, when she was alive, he paid his wife the compliment of believing what she said—a definition of friendship, surely, if not of love. That is what Mailer refuses to do.

So, for example: Marilyn told intimates, acquaintances, and interviewers that she had been raped when she was seven or eight years old. Mailer, in *Marilyn*, dismisses this story, saying it was her wont to "invent particular histories to attract pity." On the other hand, in *Of Women and Their Elegance*, he has her blandly conspiring to murder the wife of a depraved lover. This is the

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most egregious example of the disregard in which Mailer holds Monroe's truths; there are others. Monroe always claimed her foster parents didn't love her. How can this be? Mailer asks ingenuously: they dressed her so well. (As if ribbons and starch are not used to hide the scars and bruises of abused children.) Indeed, whether or not Monroe was loved by these people is irrelevant. The fact is she felt unloved. I think we must take her word for that. The beginning of understanding is to believe what people say of themselves.

Hell, we are told, has no fury like a woman scorned; the stench that arises from Mailer's writing about Monroe comes from a similar source. He wanted her (though he never met her); Arthur Miller—whom Mailer represents as pinched, petty, mean, a "timid hero" of middle-class life—got her. It may be as simple as that: Mailer is jealous. The other guy from Brooklyn, who Mailer never thought would come to much, got her. But Mailer's jealousy doesn't stop with Miller. He is ungenerous to every man who shared her bed or furthered her career. DiMaggio comes off as vain and boorish and stupid and without purpose; Laurence Olivier is made to sound like a pansy; Yves Montand is both careless and pompous; Strasberg is dim. None of this stops Mailer from feeling sorry for the men Marilyn—a "mistress of a coven"—joined herself to. A blight all around.

Adoring her, despising her—his "angel of sex," his gargoyle, his honey, his freak, his "cornucopia," his "emotional pigmy"—pitying her for her "inheritance of insanity," and for "the gentle nakedness of her nerves," loving her "sweet vitality" and generosity, her "niceness," decrying her "Napoleonic" ambition and her "narcissism"—what is Mailer to make of the complex, complicated woman he has created? What is he to make of the naif who speaks to minnows and to birches—and who tells a stagehand (unforgivably, he thinks) to "fuck off"? A better question is: what is he to make of his own warring feelings?

Finally, those feelings seem to say, gentlemen *do* prefer blondes:

> Marilyn Monroe who was blonde and beautiful and had all the cleanliness of clean American backyards . . . would ask no price. She was not the dark contract of those passionate brunette depths that speak of blood, vows taken for life, and the furies of vengeance if you are untrue to the depth of passion. . . . 'Take me,' said her smile. 'I'm easy.'

There is not enough truth in this blonde-brunette twaddle to fill a Clairol bottle (and Marilyn was, by the way, a bottle-blonde). The real message concealed here is that Mailermen fear passionate intensity in a woman (sex with brunettes is "difficult and dangerous"). They require their sex objects to be like vanilla ice cream—to go down easily. They want "no price" asked—which is to say they want to eat their sugar and run.

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison

Barbara Grizzuti Harrison is the author of *Off Center* (Dial) and *Visions of Glory* (Simon & Schuster).

Clemenceau Was Right

The End of Order: Versailles 1919
by Charles L. Mee Jr.

(Dutton; $15.95)

"Far from restoring order to the world, they took the chaos of the Great War, and, through vengefulness and inadvertence, impotence and design, they sealed it as the permanent condition of our century." Charles Mee says, with some vengefulness of his own, that our torments are the work of Lloyd George, Clemenceau, and Wilson at Paris in 1919, but he does not provide the wearisome political history that surely would complicate this case. Instead he offers a new, bravura performance of John Maynard Keynes's arraignment of the Big Three in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1920). It could be made into a splendidly entertaining docudrama, ready (down to script-like narrative and scene shifts) to fill several evenings of television with conflict, pageant, intrigue, and textbook characters from central casting: ferocious Clemenceau, mercurial Lloyd George, the dyspeptic Presbyterian preacher Woodrow Wilson. Add a running commentary from brilliant youth, disillusioned—Keynes himself, Harold Nicolson, William Bullitt—and the right music (Ravel?) as the camera moves from silly oldsters balancing teacups at the Hotel Majestic to those helmeted skulls washed by the cold rain falling on Verdun.

Part of me wants to see the networks do it, for it has its uses. Mee affirms history's great law of consequence: whatever we do and do not do will be paid for, twice or 10 times over, by somebody (probably innocent) sooner or later. And he vividly evokes the chaos diplomats faced: the devastation of a war fought with murderous incompetence, millions of families from Antwerp to Shantung trapped in hunger, disease, and despair, the collapse of order and the flight of faith, revolution and hundreds of local conflicts barring the road to resumption of bearable life. Mee calls it a "massive psychic breakdown" of European civilization, enough to numb the minds of peacemakers who were, besides, driven by waves of fury and greed to rush their work of solving

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everything. But if this is so and if, as Mee concludes, "the lesson of Versailles is protean, not simple, and as the event is turned over in the mind, a hundred different nuances and shadings appear," why should he or we (or the networks) be content with early Keynes, however deftly garnished? Why settle for mere melodrama and the dangerous lesson—as docudrama often does—that if only we sensible ones had been in Wilson's place, we would have done so much better, perhaps by leaving our silk hats and stomach pills at home and bringing along a couple of Republican senators instead? Why not heed an older, wiser Nicolson's plea, made about the also maligned Vienna Congress of 1815?

> If, moreover, we are to derive any instruction . . . it is useful to dismiss from our minds the assumption that the diplomats who framed the final settlement at Vienna were more selfish, stupid or reactionary than the ordinary run of men. Such an assumption might tempt us to believe that future negotiators will be more enlightened, progressive, prescient, unselfish and alert. The problem of preserving the unity of a mixed Coalition, the problem of adjusting national interests to international needs, are constantly recurring problems which at times transcend the capacity of human intelligence. They are problems which in modern times, when public opinion is scarcely less ignorant and certainly more assertive, will become even more difficult.
>
> (*The Congress of Vienna*, 1946)

It is often said that political historians have only themselves to blame when gifted writers of general history like Charles Mee capture the market of history buffs whose shelves are bare of our own plodding works on such puzzles as the Paris conference. But there is only so much that livelier writing could do for us academicians. Political history is by its nature tedious and the more we struggle to demonstrate why politics is the highest art, out of its complexity and its awful consequences, the more we demand of readers. To set forth those "hundred different nuances and shadings" is to test repeatedly the liberal Enlightenment's faith that free citizens would sit still for hours of picking through the detail of public matters. Is it not enough to ask whether Mee's remake of Keynes would better nourish the public mind than another week of sitcoms? Shall we gamble on stirring up interest by dramatic half-truth, or leave political history to the few? Despite its faults, Mee's book tempts me to let the cameras roll, but also to hope that he will turn his imagination to certain scenes he cuts too soon and revise his script accordingly.

He might begin with his own remarks on Clemenceau, so much at odds with his conclusion that vengefulness or design were necessarily at work:

> All of his demands were suspended in a shifting, variable relationship to one another. To rebuild France after the war, he might prefer to take loans from America instead of reparations from Germany. He might be less severe on German disarmament if the Americans and the English would agree to a military alliance to protect France against possible German aggression. . . . On the other hand, if Allied cooperation did not continue after war . . . then France would resort to a harsh peace with Germany to attempt, with whatever prospect of failure, to hold Germany down. For Clemenceau's aim was to lead Europe, not ruin her, to dominate the continent, not devastate it, to hold Germany down and let her up again under French terms, to keep Germany divided for a time and let her up into a Europe knit together in a customs union dominated by France—in short, to pursue a policy not unlike the one the Allies would adopt after the end of the Second World War.

To recreate the scene as the French saw it would make better history and better drama too. Mee's sources are too narrowly Anglo-Saxon, even to the exclusion of Etienne Mantoux's reply to Keynes in *The Carthaginian Peace, or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes* (1946). Historians should learn from novelists to speak through those characters who have the most at stake, who are the most anguished by the situation. Of the victors at Paris, the French, whose minds were concentrated wonderfully by living next to Germany, were afraid, and they were right about the German problem. The British and the Americans were not afraid and they were wrong. Clemenceau's anguish lay in his need to keep Britain and America close, to rebuild a balance of power, and everything was against him.

True to historical law, each people's interests followed upon who and where they were and what had happened to them before. Feeling safe across the Channel and the Atlantic, the Anglo-Saxons resisted commitments to France of the sort they believed had drawn them (and the French) into the Great War. As Mee suggests, only a second war taught them that avoidance was just as dangerous. Clemenceau's balance of power was not to be. The Anglo-American treaty of guarantee to France, meant to quiet him, was never

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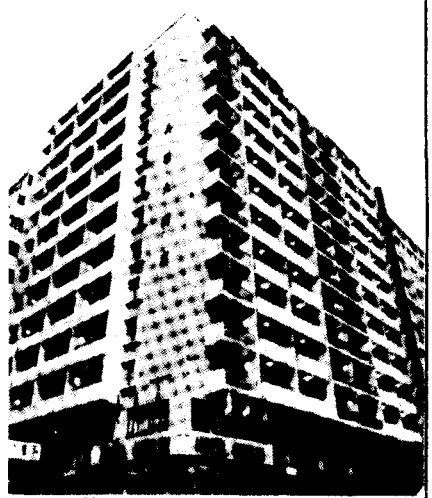

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submitted to the United States Senate and the British happily took their chance to slip away in turn. On the other hand, a peace of reconciliation was no more likely. German ferocity and every nation's propaganda were too recent, but also, less often noted, Britons and Americans were far from generous in 1919. Had they been as disinterested as they were remote and self-satisfied, they might have made a softer peace, but they rushed to pocket every advantage as cheaply as they could and only later decided to feel guilty about it.

The British wanted all or most of Germany's colonies, commerce, merchant fleet and navy, the low countries secure, a France not too strong in European affairs, a decently prosperous German trading partner and bulwark against the Reds—all of which followed upon victory itself, or seemed to be in the nature of things, given any sort of peace. Having gathered so much so soon, plus an outrageous 40 percent of whatever reparations would be paid (over 20 times the Belgian share), Lloyd George discovered equity and German feelings, and proceeded to scold the French for their demands, in sermons cloaking his resolve to avoid responsibility. That the ferocious Clemenceau waited so long to explode was proof of his dependence. On balance, Mee does sufficient justice to Lloyd George, who by 1919 was little else but mercurial, Keynes's "goat-footed bard," skipping from meetings of the Three to picnics with Frances Stevenson. And no one will begrudge Mee the comic relief he finds in the antics of other lesser characters. But he obscures the tragic drama of Paris by doing less than justice to Wilson and Clemenceau.

Across the gulf of their personalities, on both of which Mee is pitiless, the two had in common everything that was important. Both were deadly serious, agonizing over the future. Each knew, or came to know, what had to be done. Neither had the power to do it. Not inadvertence or design or vengefulness, but impotence, made their failure. That nobody has since improved on Wilson's vision of self-determined nations, governed democratically within, bound together in a league to keep the peace, could be no help to Clemenceau in 1919. Nor even Wilson's agreement with him that France would be in danger without a workable system to keep Germany contained. The president simply did not speak for the American mainstream of politics and business, whose notions of the world and of American interests in it constantly crossed and hobbled him. Wilson was undone more by narrow nationalism from home (some of it, of course, his own) than by the storied villains of old Europe, who, after all, set up his League, which might have worked had the United States honored his pledge to join, and to bolster it with the French alliance. But all this is to say again that World War II had not yet happened. Clemenceau's tragedy—and ours—was that, for all the talk and pageantry and paper signings, he and France were alone, isolated and overborne by forces beyond the power of any diplomats to bring to order in only six months. It may be hard to bring off on a small screen.

Paul Gagnon

Paul Gagnon is professor of history at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and author of *France Since 1789* (Harper & Row).

Catholic Devotions

The Company of Women by Mary Gordon

(Random House, $12.95)

Like being singled out as a child to be the object of others' great love and hope, writing an acclaimed first novel can be a mixed blessing. Great expectations loom forever after. To judge from the importance of special daughters in Mary Gordon's fiction, she seems to have known the first fate, and has no doubt learned the second during the three years since her excellent first novel, *Final Payments*, was published. A second novel faces the challenge of showing new promise without betraying any of the old.

In *The Company of Women* Gordon pursues the theme she developed in *Final Payments*: a much-loved daughter's experience of the conflict between the anachronistic Catholic world she grows up in and the sexually liberated, politically radical America of the 1960s and 1970s she finds beyond it. Among the host of almost formulaic contemporary novels by women about women in search of love, *Final Payments* stood out for its depiction of working-class Catholic life, where a more demanding drama of giving and receiving love unfolded. Under the sway of the church, Gordon's women were ready to dedicate their lives to others—not to husbands or lovers, but to parents, children, one another, and priests. Now Gordon seems to be elaborating a formula of her own. Not only does she keep to her original theme, she also constructs a similar structure. Both Isabel Moore in *Final Payments* and Felicitas Maria Taylor in *The Company of Women* venture forth from their Catholic haven, no longer fortified by the faith but irrevocably influenced by Catholicism's unfashionable mores. They try out the ordinary world and are made unhappy in love. In trouble, they retreat to a new version of their former lives.

Where Gordon ventures beyond her own model is in narrative technique. In her first novel Gordon had Isabel tell her story in the first person, which she did with authority and wit. Gordon's prose was strikingly crafted, full of carefully chosen words, observations, and ironies, especially throughout the first part of Isabel's tale—the 11 years she spent nursing her fiercely orthodox father, just the two of them in their dark house in Queens, until he died when she was 30. In *The Company of Women* young Felicitas has six collaborators telling the first section of her story, which takes place in the summer of 1969: her mother, four of her mother's friends, and a priest, Father Cyprian, who is spiritual mentor to all of them and surrogate father to the child (whose real father is long dead). As an omniscient narrator this time, Gordon never stands far back. Instead she projects herself into each of her characters in turn, looking through their eyes, speaking in their voices.

Gordon's ambitious narrative effort, however, does not succeed in opening out onto a more crowded Catholic scene. Unhappily, Gordon's new com-

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pany seems to be composed of characters lifted from the periphery of Isabel's world in *Final Payments* to stand on their own nearer the center of the new novel, which it soon becomes clear they're not substantial enough to do. Felicitas's mother, Charlotte, remarks on a penchant of Father Cyprian's, which Gordon unfortunately shares:

> Cyprian thought she was stupid. That was what he meant when he said, 'Charlotte is the salt of the earth.' He had to do that with people, have that one little sentence about everyone, as if he couldn't remember who was who without it. She was the salt of the earth and Elizabeth was one of God's doves and Clare had a mind like a man's and Mary Rose was a ray of sunlight and Muriel was an extraordinary soul.

Since these women, even stolid Charlotte, view themselves largely in Cyprian's terms, they tend to offer variations on his little epithets when Gordon gives them their chance to come forward. Not surprisingly, this makes for prose that is stylized and uneven, and characters who are closer to types than to fully imagined selves—and familiar types at that. Elizabeth and Clare are like maiden-aunt versions of, respectively, dreamy Eleanor and manly Liz, Isabel's best friends. Whining Muriel is a parody of Margaret in the earlier novel, who was a parody of the spinster with a martyr complex. Even Charlotte, whose personality is rounded out by the other characters' views of her, often lapses into caricatured saltiness when she speaks in her own voice, which Gordon loads with clichéd colloquialisms, "hells," and "goddamns." And Father Cyprian is cut from the same fierce, flawed, God-like cloth as Isabel's father; this adamant anti-sentimentalist who for years has been the anchor in the lives of these women is less compelling in the flesh than Mr. Moore was in Isabel's memory.

Only Felicitas, a younger and plainer version of Isabel, comes fully to life through others' doting visions of her and through her own voice, which inspires some of Gordon's best prose: "She believed she was worthy. Her soul she saw as glass filled with sky or water, as beautiful, as light, as silvery and important. That was her soul, light let through some transparent thing, cool light refreshed by water." This serious 14-year-old lives for the summers spent among the odd company in the New York countryside, for the trip to six p.m. mass in the red pickup alone with Father Cyprian, talking about the splendor of God, the illusory beauty of nature, the turpitude of mankind—though she would never dream of admitting this joy to the friends she has made back at school in Brooklyn.

But six years later at Columbia, at the height of student radicalism, a rebellious Felicitas is ready to ridicule those joys to win the approval of the liberated friends she is desperate to have. As in *Final Payments*, Gordon's ironic sense and psychological insight are thrown off their accurate course when she turns from the outdated virginal enclave to portray the secular world beyond it. Her version of the 1960s scene is a superficial caricature rather than a penetrating parody. Robert Cavendish, Felicitas's political science professor and seducer, is ludicrous from the moment he strides into class and starts pontificating about "St. Herbert" (Marcuse). Out of class he's even worse, as he generously donates his beautiful body to the cause of promoting "revolutionary consciousness" through sex—naturally without the "possessiveness trip." Robert's physique simply is not enough to explain why the once discriminating (often outright intolerant) Felicitas should fall for him and, with uncharacteristic piety, receive his attentions as "a blessing." Occasionally she has flashes of her old judgmental self and pierces the self-righteous vacuity of the Columbia crowd with jokes, which of course they never get. But mostly she suffers Robert's abuse, convinced she's happy and free for the first time. Only when she finds she's pregnant does she turn back to her Catholic company in misery and need.

They take her in and give her their unconditional love, which they also give her child, yet another in the line of special daughters "whose family life is peculiar." Gordon's feminine geneology is becoming all too familiar. But behind it lies a typology of love that gives Gordon's novels their uncommon clarity: the fierce love of God and the charity for all souls dictated by the Catholic faith; the selective but unswerving human love that flourishes in families, among friends (companies of women in Gordon's books); the sexual love between men and women. The fate of Gordon's heroines (unlike her other characters) is to know the competing claims of all three kinds of love and ultimately to choose the circumscribed love of a devoted enclave, which they took for granted when young and come to value, stoically rather than joyfully, in maturity. It is, as Felicitas says, an "isolated, difficult and formal" life, an anomaly in the "ordinary" world, where love is distributed differently. There, as Gordon showed in *Final Payments*, charity is left to government, which dispenses it "without the weights of love." And there, as she shows this time, sexual love is easy, indiscriminate. But that world knows little of the steadfast love among close souls. Despite the weaknesses of her second effort, Gordon clearly is an authority on such loyal companies.

Ann Hulbert

Mysteries

It is a mysterious truth of mystery fiction that the best books in the genre appear immune to screen adaptation. No farrago of nonsense could be better calculated to drive the skeptic out of the theater and away from the book than *The Mirror Crack'd*, released as a mistaken Christmas treat and doomed to misrepresent poor Agatha Christie into the Egyptian palaces of the midlands for months to come. Now Mobil, bless its intentions, is back again with a new series of made-for-television mysteries, shown on PBS, perhaps to make amends for the initial films that went so awry. Vincent Price ought to be just the right host for the series, and with advertisements and credit lines from Gorey, one has reason to hope. Yet one can see

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these hopes dashed already, after an inept *Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* which left one crying out for Spencer Tracy and the young Ingrid Bergman once more, and now a talkative and unconvincing *Malice Aforethought*. Many thought this Francis Iles's best book—happily back in print in Harper & Row's estimable Perennial Library—and quite a few readers professed to identify sympathetically with the self-confessed murderer, Dr. Bickleigh. No one could possibly identify with the cold fish that greets us on PBS, and though we no longer have the generally hysterical commentary of the initial series, Price appears to think his viewers dim-witted dwellers along TV row, for what he has to say is painfully condescending.

And then, also in January, there was the long-awaited debut of Nero Wolfe. The first episode, taken loosely from *The Golden Spiders*, is embarrassing. William Conrad is chubby enough, and he can sound pompous enough, to pass for Wolfe when not standing next to someone; when put against a ludicrously miscast Archie Goodwin, who rises above him, Conrad is simply wrong for the part. Cramer is so bad he ought to sue, and Saul Panzer, once he stops thinking about what Wolfe did to Orrie Cather (in *A Family Affair*), will sue too, since he is shown here as an unreliable coward. Even the music is wrong in the Nero Wolfe series, a mistake *Malice Aforethought* didn't make.

One can understand why so many people dismiss detective fiction as junk. It usually is, when transferred to the screen. Only one transfer truly worked, and that was in the early years of television, when Raymond Burr's Perry Mason seemed more real than Erle Stanley Gardner's. Some television series, notably *Rockford* and, at times, *Macmillan and Wife*, manage to be authentic to the genre, but they began from scratch with no previous conception of hero, crook, or conventional mystery to hamper them. One wonders, with so many pictorially effective detective stories around, why television keeps choosing the very books least adaptable to visual argument. For *Malice Aforethought* is purely psychological, and Wolfe turns upon a series of static interiors in which really good dialogue takes place between Wolfe and Goodwin, dialogue we hear in the ear as we read it. We don't need television for this.

The best read around, and utterly without padding, is Robert B. Parker's latest, *Early Autumn* (Delacorte; $9.95). I am partial to Spenser, though I thought the last time out, while searching for Rachel Wallace, he was off color, so I am happy to report that he is back in stride. There is only the mystery of human beings here: a 15-year-old boy is being used as a pawn in a spiteful war between a stupid woman and a vicious man. Though the kid is pretty unattractive, Spenser is hired to keep some hired thugs from kidnapping him from the wife, who has been given custody, and delivering him over to the husband. Eventually Spenser has to take the boy off to the Maine woods, partially to keep him out of sight though largely to try to put him on the path to manhood. The theme is trite enough, of course, and in the hands of a sentimentalist or a sociologist it could be quite unreadable. But Parker tells it like it is, or might be, in lines that mostly ring true. There is very little action; still, with two car chases, one can guess how the television writers will adapt *Early Autumn* if they get their hands on it. It appears Willa Cather knew something when, after the second, and disastrous, filming of *A Lost Lady*, she left it in her will that none of her books were ever to be translated into motion pictures, television, or any other visual medium that might in future be invented.

Robin Winks

Brief Reviews

Three Mile Island
by Mark Stephens

(Random House; $11.95)

Mark Stephens's "hour-by-hour account" of the accident at Three Mile Island confirms many nuclear critics' worst fears: "only luck saved the people around Three Mile Island." Defective "foolproof" safety devices coupled with operator error almost caused a nuclear nightmare, a core meltdown. A succession of equipment failures—including malfunctioning pumps, jammed valves, and bewildered computers—led the plant's operators to fear that the reactor's fuel might melt through the containment structure, releasing heavy doses of deadly radiation. Confronted with a crisis they had convinced themselves never could occur, the industry's overseers, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, proved unprepared to respond to the emergency. While the NRC issued contradictory statements, collided with the Environmental Protection Agency, and stumbled over the White House, a horrified local populace began to doubt anyone could stop the nuclear runaway and bring the reactor to a cold shutdown.

Stephens, a member of the President's Commission on the Accident at Three Mile Island, dwells on the human frailties that produced the crisis. As a company guilty of putting "economics before public safety," Metropolitan Edison—TMI's principal owner and operator—cut corners on everything from an inadequate work force to a shabbily constructed instrument panel smeared with ink-blotched plastic labels and masking tape. Such reckless parsimony was compounded by incompetent operators who neglected to monitor warning lights and the condition of auxiliary

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"MICHAEL HARRINGTON, writing in the New York Times: 'If we are talking about morality, Americans cannot be allowed to forget our national complicity in acts much more reprehensible than those so wrongly perpetrated upon our fellow citizens.' Right, Mike. Our inordinate fear of Nazism led us to join with any dictator who joined us in that fear, causing us to help prop up the barbarous Soviet regime. Let's cut all our ties with socialista everywhere. Right, Mike?"

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systems. "It's easy to forget. . . . You can get distracted," said one fallible worker required to do an infallible job.

In his eagerness to tell "what really happened" Stephens also gets distracted. For example, he assures us that recent "studies" (due to the absence of any footnotes or bibliography we cannot know which studies) indicate that a core meltdown would have been less serious than previously anticipated. Other experts, ignored by Stephens, argue that only a test run, an unappealing prospect, could determine the effects of a meltdown. And the political and social context of nuclear power is more complex than the Gallup poll Stephens cites as evidence of America's shifting views. Altogether, Stephens offers a superficial firsthand account.

David Seideman

My Brilliant Career by Miles Franklin

(St. Martin's Press; $9.95)

It is a pleasure to turn to the original novel upon which Gillian Armstrong's fine film was closely modeled. Written in 1895 when its author, Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin, was a mere 16 years old, and published in 1901, the novel remained out of print by the author's choice until after her death. However, Franklin went on to publish eight other novels under various pseudonyms. The reissue of her first novel offers an opportunity to discover how energetic and accomplished the work actually is.

The central character, Sybylla Melvyn, is clearly a woman born in the wrong place and time, as she is all too acutely aware. The eldest daughter of a profligate father and a proud, bitter mother whose "polish had been worn off by years and years of scrubbing and scratching, and washing and patching, and poverty and husbandly neglect," Sybylla is virtually indentured within her large family, struggling to survive by farming in a stagnant Australian backwater called Possum Gulley. However, she is tormented less by the physical hardship than by her fear (at 15) that she will never have the chance to achieve distinction for the talents in music and literature with which she feels she is endowed—of never accomplishing her "brilliant career."

Escape from the drudgery of farm life and her mother's emotional tyranny comes in the form of an invitation from Sybylla's maternal grandmother to visit with her at her far more genteel estate. During her stay at Caddegat Sybylla becomes a "lady," but only on the surface. With the aid of her aunt Helen, she tries to make the most of her appearance to counteract her self-perceived ugliness. She adorns herself in evening clothes and "war paint," scoffing all the while at men whose heads are turned by such subterfuges.

One of those men is Harold Beecham, an earnest man from the neighboring estate who, though endearing and sincere, lacks the impetuous fire that drives Sybylla. Sybylla teases and torments Harold, railing against his dream of a conventional marriage, and failing to see how deeply her antics injure his profound though inarticulate feelings for her. One of the strengths of the novel is the way the author marshals our sympathies for both strong-willed Sybylla, with her head full of adolescent dreams and longings for a unique life, and Harold, whose steady loyalty and dignity in the face of rejection anchors him in an equally persuasive maturity. It is to the youthful author's credit that she preserves enough distance from her protagonist to portray Sybylla's tantrums as faithfully as her fantasies. The encounters between Sybylla and Harold are engaging variations on the taming of the shrew—except that Sybylla is never tamed.

There is a fierce animal courage and innocence in Franklin's heroine who, choosing spiritual independence over physical comfort and emotional security, refuses what may be the only escape from the monotonous life of the outback. Wise beyond her years in some ways and utterly childish in others, Sybylla distinguishes herself from her female contemporaries with a sympathy that barely disguises her anger at the condition of her sex:

> Daughters of toil, who scrub and wash and mend and cook, who are dressmakers, paperhangers, milkmaids, gardeners, and candlemakers all in one, and yet have the time to be cheerful and tasty in your homes, and make the best of the few oases to be found along the narrow dusty track of your existence. Would that I were more worthy to be one of you—more a typical Australian peasant—cheerful, honest, brave!

Franklin's work, hardly a traditional Victorian novel of courtship, concludes with her modern but still adolescent heroine, having rejected Harold, facing an uncertain future back in Possum Gulley, ever in rebellion against dullness and convention. Although the spunky heroine of *My Brilliant Career* is not always right, either about herself or others, she is an irresistible creation.

Roberta Rubenstein

Roberta Rubenstein is the author of *The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing* (University of Illinois Press).

Beneath the Eagle's Wings: Americans in Occupied Japan by John Curtis Perry

(Dodd Mead; $12.95)

In the introduction to his engaging book Dr. Perry boldly announces that his focus is the successful execution of United States policy toward postwar Japan. Though his slender volume is modest in scholarly import it is nonetheless a well-researched reminder that this republic's record in Asia is not entirely barren of positive results.

In 1945 the course was less clear. Throughout her 1,500 years of civilization in the East Asian world, Japan had been neither defeated nor occupied by a foreign foe. The wary advance units of military troops landing at Atsugi Naval Air Base on August 28 were stunned by their stoic reception by a former enemy so recently fanatical in its resolve to defend the homeland against Allied assaults.

That General Douglas MacArthur was totally convinced of the convergence of his mission with the destiny of this conquered land remains the dominant theme of the Occupation. And although Perry's primary emphasis is anecdotal rather than analytical, there is no escaping the omnipresence of this autocratic figure who willed the sweep-

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ing transformation of a decimated Japan from a provincial past to a position from which her burgeoning economy would emerge to challenge the Western world.

The scope of MacArthur's reforms was only slightly less extraordinary than the Japanese acquiescence in the implementation of his program. The government was fashioned along parliamentary lines and the emperor reduced to a figurehead. The general's liberal land reform program simply dwarfed the Chinese model of Mao Zedong. Women were emancipated, the courts were liberalized, the police humanized, and economic monopolies curtailed. War profits were confiscated and returned to the government. Militarists were purged from positions of authority and the new nation institutionalized pacifism as the keystone of its foreign policy.

This is all the more remarkable when one recalls the degree to which MacArthur's stateside critics suspected the general's ideological credentials. *The New Republic* feared he would "appease . . . the conservative social and economic elemer in Japan which were behind this w , and would be glad to get behind another one."

By 1950 Japanese exports exceeded imports and America began to view this economic renaissance as an emergent bulwark against the communist Chinese. Perry traces the evolution of Japan from a despised enemy to the posture of a potential ally and, in so doing, examines the mutual effect this process had upon the former adversaries. To some degree the phenomenon almost suggests the complementary relationship of the Greeks with their Roman conquerors. Though stopping short of drawing this conclusion, the author accentuates the reciprocal effects of acculturation.

Perry concedes that the story remains incomplete. Yet like William Manchester's biography of MacArthur, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings* doubtless will be a cornerstone for future historians intending to construct the comprehensive study of the Occupation.

Alan L. Miller

Alan L. Miller is a freelance writer whose reviews have appeared in the *Christian Science Monitor.*

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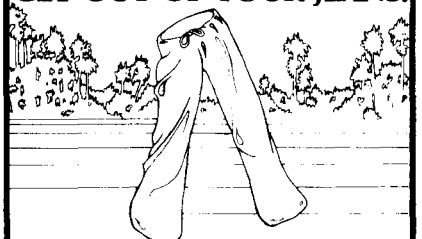

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Washington Diarist

Freedom

Everyone these days is interested in language. Almost every week the *New York Times* brings us the latest scholarship on the origin of phrases like "hitting the ground running," an already obsolete Reaganism, or "have a nice day," the linguistic equivalent of the insipid stick-figure smile. I leave to William Safire and others the story of how new words come into being. My interest is in how old words change. Some, for example, have become their opposite. I was made aware of this phenomenon several years ago when a late-night *Maltese Falcon* I was watching was interrupted by one of those earsplitting every-record-ever-made-for-50-cents ads (the ones that alternate with the trucking academy promos). It wasn't the first time I was being asked to buy the records of a mediocre folk singer called Jim Croce, but it was the first time I had heard him referred to as the immortal Jim Croce. As it turned out, his immortality had been only recently acquired. The unfortunate Mr Croce had been killed in a plane crash weeks before. As one wit has observed, the first condition of immortality is death.

Word inversion is not the exclusive province of TV hucksters. It is also a specialty of dialectical materialists. Take, for example, the Peking *Peoples' Daily* of February 16: "Freedom of speech does not mean that you can simply say what you want to say or what you like saying." What then does it mean? I suppose it means allowing people to use socialist realist syntax to say things that promote party and country. The Chinese leaders may believe that letting people simply say what they want is a luxury affordable only in advanced societies. (China may indeed be more in need of an adequate food supply and rapid industrialization than free speech.) But they look a bit foolish when they pretend to have their cake and freedom too.

The Peking editorialists are not the first to invert the meaning of freedom. Jean Jacques Rousseau may not have been the first either but he was one of the most skilled. In the *Social Contract* he speaks without irony of "forcing men to be free." By freedom he meant transcendence, the triumph of one's reason, liberation from the demands of one's baser instincts. In short, he was talking about achieving a kind of rationalist virtue, even if people had to be coerced into it. The problem is that he insisted on calling it freedom. His legacy is a long tradition of what Isaiah Berlin calls "positive freedom"—the ideal of being governed by one's "higher self" and no longer controlled by external or internal contingencies like instinct or habit or class. On the other hand the liberal tradition values "negative freedom" being left alone to do what one pleases. The problem with positive freedom is not the unworthiness of the goal. We all aspire to reason and virtue. The problem is that it is not freedom. And worse, in the great messianic rushes to achieve "positive freedom," from Robespierre to Mao, freedom is often the first competing value to be trampled underfoot.

Representative Leo Ryan died in Guyana trying, among other things, to offer some of the disaffected followers of Jim Jones a chance to return to the (negative) freedom of the United States. Now Ryan's daughter has discovered positive freedom. She is a devoted follower of an Indian guru, Bhagwan Shree Ragneesh, whom she considers her God and whom she obeys unconditionally. A reporter asked her whether she saw any parallels between Jim Jones and her master. "What Jones created was a prison and what Bhagwan has created is a way out of the prison of ordinary life," she said. "Just total freedom is what he is all about. Jones was trying to control people while Bhagwan is trying to give people control of themselves." Rousseau would have understood. One can only imagine how Leo Ryan would have felt.

Like freedom, democracy is a political good, valuable but not absolutely so. Sometimes it must be sacrificed in order to achieve other political goods, like stability, domestic peace, and economic development. That appears to be the case in Zimbabwe, at least according to a lucid and generally sympathetic article by Xan Smiley in a recent issue of the *New York Times* magazine on the gradual transformation of Zimbabwe into a one-party state. Smiley argues rather convincingly that in a gerrymandered and tribally divided state like Zimbabwe, one-party rule is desirable and perhaps even necessary. But he is unwilling to face the fact that democracy is being given up. Instead he insists that what is evolving in Zimbabwe is democracy "but not democracy as we define it in the West." Well then, democracy as defined where? In the German Democratic Republic? Or in what the *People's Daily* would call a Peoples' Democratic Dictatorship? One may argue whether the direct democracy of Athens or the modern parliamentary democracies of the West are purer forms of democracy. One cannot argue that a form of government where the people can change neither their laws nor their rulers is democracy. Thomas Hobbes justified despotism, but at least he did not have the effrontery to call it freedom.

One of the most prolific practitioners of freedom of speech is Dick Gregory. He is usually referred to as a comedian/activist. He has other attributes as well. He is world-class grapefruit eater, a bionic faster, and a fool. Whether the last ante- or postdates the rest I do not know. Nevertheless, foolish is a charitable way to characterize something he said last week. He suggested that the 17 black children murdered in Atlanta might have been kidnapped for use in medical experiments at the Center for Disease Control. The CDC is the government agency that sends investigators shinnying up ventilation shafts in Philadelphia hotels trying to track down legionnaires' disease. And they usually get their bug. They also have their headquarters in Atlanta, a city already charged with grief, fear, and racial tension. The CDC knows that even a crackpot can light a tinderbox. So they issued a statement saying no, they did not kidnap and murder black children for medical experiments.

Blood libel is the kind of charge that even the czar had to give up in embarrassment 70 years ago. For Gregory it is an applause line in what must be his current stump speech. He made the CDC charge twice last week. The second time was at the National Institutes of Health, the foremost medical research institute in the world. He had been invited to speak as part of a series for Black History Month. His topic was "Role Models for Youth." He was paid $2,500. Have the lunatics taken over the asylum? I don't know. His hosts, I am told, were surprised and dismayed by his remark. The crowd greeted it with "a ripple of applause."

C.K.

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